Exploring Leadership

In Primary Schools in Male', the Maldives:

A Local Perspective

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Abstract

This study offers an understanding of primary school head leadership in the Maldives, following an exploration of their perspectives and practices. More specifically, the study examines the relationship between the Head Teacher's espoused leadership aspirations and accounts of their practice, what these practices are in reality, and asks the question, 'What are the implications for 'leadership' when espoused theories and headship actions do not coincide?'

This study, the first of its kind on primary school head leadership in the Maldives, employs a qualitative approach. It uses biographical data and semi-structured interviews to understand the meanings school principals attribute to leadership, their actions, and the dilemmas they face as they operate in the public schooling sector. I also draw upon documentary evidence from school logs, school handbooks, personal diaries and memos.

The findings reveal that the principals readily associate leadership with concepts and theories of leadership that are prevalent in contemporary literature on educational management and leadership. These concepts include a sense of vision and goals, engaging the emotions of individuals in the organisation, involving others through a participative approach, relationship building, and responding to the challenges arising from the context. However, the data suggests that the Primary School Heads do not engage themselves in the perceived definitions of leadership. Rather, their definitions and concepts of leadership are largely rhetorical and barely deployed in practice.

It is argued in this thesis that the gap between their philosophical understandings and pragmatic reality is largely a product of the context that confines their practices to the particular social-political setting they are placed in. The role of school head is structured by more managerial modes of engagement imposed on them, so that their leadership actions are not guided by strong democratic principles based on a personal philosophy or a theoretical foundation expressed in literature. Instead, their practices tend towards fragmented, dysfunctional engagements as part of their bureaucratic obligations, stakeholder's expectations, and personal goals and aspirations.

In conclusion, this study raises concerns over the quality of their leadership and its implications for schools in the local context. Several suggestions are put forward in this study for training and to improve policy practised in terms of school leadership in the Maldives.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife Uzlifa and our children Azha and Ismail.

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I dedicate this thesis to my family.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Bristol. This work is original, except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of this dissertation has been for any other academic award. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

Signed

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CONTENTS

List of tables and figures

ACRONYMS

MoE	Ministry of Education
NCHLR	National Centre for Historical and Linguistic Research
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations children's Fund
AEC	Atoll Education Centre
Ed.D	Doctor of Education

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: THE STATUS AND STAKES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL HEADSHIP IN THE MALDIVES

1.0 Primary School Headship in the Maldives: A Journey with Questions

By profession, I am a teacher. However, I have advanced my career following a series of promotions from being a teacher to a primary school head teacher. This was followed by other career advancements in school management and administration, including promotion from a primary head teacher to an assistant principal of a secondary school, then to senior assistant principal, followed by the position of deputy principal, and finally to headship of the school in question. When I left the country in the year 2004 to undertake my studies in Bristol, I was the principal of a middle school in Male', with a student population of over 2000. Over the course of my career, I had worked in a number of schools, including small institutions in the rural islands and large ones in the more urban islands.

Over time, I had begun to develop an interest in, and curiosity about, numerous issues concerned with school management and administration in Male'; particularly the concept of leadership, how it is delivered in school settings more generally, and more specifically in the Maldives, and what to me appeared to be a considerable mismatch between what we *did* as heads in schools and what we said we *valued* as school heads. Having worked in a number of schools as a school leader, this further led me to think of school leadership, and to question the significance of the leadership role in schools. However, in casting around for empirical research on school headship in the Maldives so that I might think through the questions and issues I was concerned with, it became apparent to me that there was no evidential base. Yet, the Maldives had undergone a major expansion in primary schooling

through the 1990s following the promotion of 'Education for All', and the Ministry had embraced the school effectiveness and school improvement literature which gave a pivotal role to school heads. Whilst this created a ready discourse on the role of the head in creating effective schools, what we did not have was a body of research examining how that was being implemented, or indeed, if what was being implemented was relevant to the particular circumstances of the Maldives and Male', and thus able to be practiced.

1.1 The Status and Stakes of School Leadership in the Maldives

There is a considerable and diverse body of literature on school leadership, including trait theory, situational and contingency theory, and transformational, transactional and distributive theory of leadership. Such ideas, which I address in more detail in Chapter Four of this dissertation, offer insights into the different ways of establishing effective practices that might help realise individual and institutional goals. Consequently, there is an enormous amount of literature on what educational leaders should be doing, with prescriptions of leadership skills and knowledge to help them perform their role efficiently and effectively. For example, in the UK, USA, Canada and Australia, many programs were launched for school leaders to ensure that school leaders possessed the desired competencies, professional knowledge, skills and values for effective school leadership (see, Bush, 2008)

However, the situation is very different in many developing countries (see, Bush and Oduro, 2006 and Commonwealth secretariat (1996), and more so for small islands like the Maldives. To begin with, 'Education For All' was a more recent development during the 1990s. It gained momentum with the increased involvement and support of international bodies such as UNESCO and the World Bank (see, MoE, 1995). The involvement of international agencies in the national education system led to the introduction of organisational innovations such as school-based management. For instance, in the Maldives, the World Bank and other funding agencies advocated decentralisation of educational governance, with an emphasis on

developing power and authority and increasing autonomy at grass roots levels (see, MOE, 1999c). This is based on the idea that schools are units of change, and that successful change takes place at school level. However, such ideas and models of school management do not seem to have been effectively realised in the Maldives. School management issues are mostly addressed in policy documents and reports by the Maldivian government to the various international funding agencies.

Neither does school leadership seem to be a priority of the Maldivian Ministry of Education in terms of improving school management and administration. For example, professional training in educational leadership is not a condition for taking up a leadership role in schools in the Maldives. In general, the appointment of principals is based upon long experience and good classroom performance. However, in my experience as a School Head, it is hard to manage a school based on teacher training and teacher classroom experience. For instance, I faced many challenges that required knowledge and understanding of my role as an educational leader on a daily basis. Furthermore, there were no supportive structures within the system to introduce change and try innovations in schools as advocated in policy documents and published reports and the wider professional literature. Consequently, there were many dilemmas and conflicts arising from role ambiguity and mixed messages with regard to the tasks that I had to attend to. These included issues of accountability and responsibility in the absence of autonomy and authority. In addition to this, while the public pressed for schools to raise standards of schooling, there was a shortage of quality teachers and other resources to meet such ends. It was an overwhelming challenge as a principal to run the schools in the midst of mounting pressure from the parents and the public. Parents always complained about the quality of teaching, and commitment of the staff in the school, expecting the school head to be present around the clock and all kinds of school functions and activities. With respect to the quality of leadership, the parents and the staff expect the school head to be a 'jack of all trades'. It was expected that the school principal should be an expert in areas of curriculum, pedagogy, staff development and counselling, human resource development, budgeting and finance, student counselling, discipline, and public liaising. A further and a very important quality on the part of school leadership in the

Maldives are oratory skills. If a school head lacks the competence in public speaking or skills in delivering public speeches, he/she can be subject to community criticisms and staff discontent that may ultimately lead to a total rejection of his/her leadership in the school.

With respect to school leadership, the educational authorities have expectations that are different from the parents or the community. They expect the school heads to follow specific instructions and implement the policies and guidelines of the Ministry. Unfortunately, such policies very often contravene the needs of the other stakeholders, who expect more of an autonomous and resourceful role from the school leadership as opposed to the authority demanding a more subservient role from the school head. The Ministry, meanwhile, expects the school head to implement its policies and act as a mediator between the central office and other stakeholders. In order to fulfil such demands, it is essential for the school head to have good communication and social skills. If a head teacher can maintain public relations and control the staff, he or she is likely to enjoy praise and rewards (in the form of service recognition) from the Ministry. Consequently, head teachers spend a lot of time organising social events for parents and teachers that do not have any direct relevance to the academic programs of the school. The authorities do not consider curriculum management and issues of human resource development as school leadership key responsibilities, and such aspects of school management remain the functions of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry determines and conducts in-service programs for the teachers and other staff, reviews and develops the school curriculum, undertakes staff appraisal, and prescribes syllabuses and text books The head teachers are left with the task of the day- to- day operations of the school, which may include allocation of teachers to classes, drawing up the timetable, conducting daily or weekly assemblies, dealing with staff conflicts, student discipline, attending to physical maintenance of the school, keeping records of school logs, organising and attending parents meetings and dealing with parental complaints

Although the schools heads have defined roles prescribed by the authorities, in my experience, a school head's daily tasks and responsibilities are fraught with much anxiety and apprehension. Often, there is a sense of uncertainty about the purpose and direction of the school as there seems to be a contradiction between what the public needs and the educational goals laid down by the educational authorities.

1993	23177
1994	23500
1995	24570
1996	25641
1997	26190
1998	27057
1999	27714
2000	28547
2001	28306
2002	28243
2003	28950
2004	29307
2005	30307
2006	29623
2007	29777

Fig 1.1 School Population Growth in Male' from 1993-2007

(Source: www.moe.mv/v3/moe/media/779pdf)

The existing curriculum is outdated, the quality of teachers has not improved, and the school populations have grown dramatically in recent times, as illustrated in Figure 1.1.

In my role as School Head, I had very little space for exercising leadership, yet the pressure to innovate and improve schools was voiced by parents and the education profession. Such concerns led me to this investigation, with the aim of exploring the reality of the situation, and I asked myself to what extent were my experiences shared by my colleagues. Therefore, this study is intended to look into and reveal the stories of the practitioners who are find themselves in similar situations to my own,

and to find out their understanding and values of leadership along with their day to day undertakings.

As a practitioner, I recognise the significance of the leadership role in schools. As referred to earlier, the significance of educational leadership is developed in the educational management literature and well documented (see, Bush, 2008; Day et al, 2000; Fullan, 1992; Creemers, 1996; Reynolds, 1991; Sammons et al., 1999; Hargreaves, 1994, Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Hopkins et al., 1994, Dalin, 1998; Mortimore et al., 1997). According to all these authors, the leadership role played by the head teacher has a significant impact on all the processes related to school improvement. In fact, some writers have been more specific in their deliberations and associate quality of leadership with school outcomes (see, Hallinger and Heck, 1999). Indeed, such writers ascribe the successes and failures of schooling to the school leadership and its quality. For example, Hill (1989) acknowledges that quality of leadership by the heads is the single most important factor in delivering effective practice at a school. Similarly, Leithwood et al. (2006:5) assert:

> There is not a single document case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership.

Taking into account the views referred to above, this study explores how the school heads imagine school leadership and describes the leadership actions that have relevance to school effectiveness and school improvement.

1.2. Leadership in Context: A Research Agenda for the Maldives

According to some writers, leadership definitions cannot be understood without considering the context in which they are conceived (see, Haber and Davies, 1997, Foskett and Lumby, 2003; Fertig, 2000, Dimmock and Walker, 2005; Crossley, and Holmes, 1999). For instance, Crossley and Watson (2003), argue that 'context matters' and stress that our conceptualisations of leadership should be sensitive to the

specificities of the conditions (social, economic, cultural and political) of a country where it is exercised. As an experienced practitioner, I concur with the above notions, and strongly believe that there is a link with the wider context, how people understand the concept of school leadership and the way they respond to the role. It is also this belief that further encouraged me to do this study; to seek a local conceptualisation of what constitutes school leadership and what occurs as leadership practice in schools in Male'.

This study is related to the issues raised above, aiming to offer an account of leadership from a Maldivian context. The Maldives, as a small state country, possesses a unique culture and political system. This is illustrated in the analysis of the context (see Chapter 2 for details). For example, in the Maldives, the school principal's power is severely limited by the rules (and culture and associated traditions) of the system, with little capacity to perform the sort of educational leadership imagined in the literature. The educational system is highly centralised, and the structure remains intact despite the proclaimed policies and slogans on decentralisation and school based management (ideas borrowed from Western educational systems). On the contrary, the government (the Ministry of Education) controls a host of educational areas that are supposedly tasks and responsibilities of the head teachers in other systems (see DfES, 0083/2004). For example, the Ministry of Education in the Maldives designs the national curriculum, syllabus, text books, allocates budget (funds), staffing of schools, teacher selection, recruitment, staff development, and undertakes many of the school management functions that are essentially tasks of school leaders in other systems (see DfES, 0083/ 2004).

The primary objective of this study is to examine how leadership is imagined and to explore how resources are deployed as part of their leadership practices. To this end, my own personal knowledge and experience is used as a data source in this study. In this respect, what is being reported has thus been influenced by the writer's knowledge and personal experiences, though I hope with sufficient reflection? I hope this research will contribute to a better understanding of leadership practices among

the practitioners and policy makers in the Maldives, in doing so, secure more positive scenario for future practice.

1.3 Male' and the Maldives – the Context

This study took place in Male', which is the capital of the Maldives with a population of 80,000 (a third of the population of the country). There are six primary schools in Male' and they are all run under the strict supervision of the Ministry of Education. As I have noted already, educational governance is highly centralised, with most of the educational and human resources development and management functions carried out centrally. These include curriculum development, teacher training, employment, deployment and staff appraisal. There is a director general as chief executive for schools in Male', from whom the principals follow direct instructions, and he/she exercises the executive functions that were referred to above. The schools are closely directed and monitored by the Ministry of Education, while the role of school leadership is confined to tasks and responsibilities prescribed by the authorities (see, Appendix D). The school heads are not exclusively accountable for the school outcomes as they do not have the responsibility for major decisions such as staffing, staff development and curriculum matters. This is in stark contrast to what exists in other systems; particularly in industrialised countries like England, Australia, and the USA (see, Bush, 2008). However, this appears to be a common feature of many developing countries (see, Lauglo, 1997). Many small states have bureaucratic systems where the leadership decisions are taken at the top and resources are controlled centrally (ibid). Very few decisions are taken at the school level, and school principals have limited authority in areas of school management and administration (ibid). The above facts are true in the Maldives, as the principals essentially attend to tasks associated with the day to day operation of the school.

Like in many developing countries, there is no systematic procedure for the recruitment, selection, training and development of school leaders (see, Crossley and

Holmes, 1999) in the Maldives. The appointment of school leaders is based mainly on good classroom performance and personal achievement in their career from teacher to supervisor and then onto becoming assistant principal or principal. Thus, the schools are led by head teachers who have never received any adequate professional training on leadership or school management.

Until recently, positions of principals were largely filled by expatriates from Sri Lanka and India. But due to the high costs of expatriates, they are now being replaced by local teachers or supervisors with little to no management or leadership training or experience. Consequently, these appointments have led school heads to become more dependent on the Ministry. Their idea of management is to take orders from the authorities and to act as mediators between the Ministry, the teachers and the parents. However, with recent social and economic developments taking place in the country, school management is confronted with enormous pressure from the public to offer better services and demonstrate alternative modes of school management and leadership practices. A detailed account of the country's socio–economic, cultural and educational context is provided in Chapter 2.

1.4 Research Questions and Methodological Framework

Two key aims are at the heart of this study: first; to provide an understanding of school leadership as described by school heads in Male' and its implications for the roles (practices) they undertake; second; to draw upon the findings from this study to raise issues in relation to the leadership and management of schools in the Maldives, which would in turn inform policy and practice. With these aims in mind, this study was guided by the following research questions:

- What do the principals understand by the concept of school leadership?
- How do the principals describe their school leadership practices?

- Are there differences between their conceptions and practices, and what are the consequences of these differences for effective leadership?

This study draws its conceptual framework from the school organisation and school leadership literature. Theoretical insights from the above mentioned sources of literature were adopted to analyse the data and provide a critique of the findings. I consider this a useful strategy appropriate for the purpose of this study for the underlying reasons. Firstly, school organisations and leadership practices seem to have been borrowed and transferred across all nations despite geographical distances between them. Secondly, this research is also intended to explore the influence of this worldwide leadership phenomenon on local practitioners in terms of conceptualising school leadership, and to determine what resources the school heads employed in their practice.

This study adopts a constructivist approach to the research. This stance was taken because the research questions posed in this study could be best answered by using a qualitative approach. In this approach, researchers make sense of the meanings others have about the world, which are the participants' views of the situation. The goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situations. For this purpose, general and open-ended questions were posed to the participants. In this way, the researcher was able to learn how the participants understood their situations so that I might reveal the multiple realities and complexities under investigation. The methodological framework including the assumptions behind the choice of philosophical position, methodology and methods of data collection and analysis techniques are all presented in detail in Chapter 3.

1.5. Significance of this Study

It is anticipated that this research will make a contribution to theory, practice and methodology as follows. To begin with, there is no research on school leadership in the Maldives. This research develops insights into aspects of leadership that need the

attention of policy makers and raises issues that will warrant further investigation. Furthermore, most of the existing literature on school leadership comes from Western industrialised countries. This study provides an account of the stories and experiences of primary school heads in a developing country, which is also a small nation. Finally, the findings from this study relating to the understandings and practices of school heads may contribute knowledge and insights that could be used by incumbent and prospective principals.

1.6 Organisation of this Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into two sections. Section I- *Primary School Leadership in the Maldives: Context and Methodology* comprises Chapter One, Two, and Three, while *Section II- Primary School Leadership in the Maldives: Resources, Histories, Rhetoric, Actions and Dilemmas* spans Chapters Four to Eight.

In Section I, Chapter One describes the background of school leadership in the Maldives and an overview of this study, while Chapter Two presents the context of the study. Chapter Three presents the methodological framework used, including the conceptual framework, research strategy, methods of data collection, techniques of data analysis and the ethical issues involved.

In Section II, Chapter Four reviews the professional literature which is available for heads' use as a resource for their leadership practice. Chapter Five then presents analysis and reflection on the biographical data for conceptualising leadership. Chapter Six presents analysis of leadership practices, while Chapter 7 presents an analysis of the conflicts and dilemmas which emerge and which must be resolved. Finally, Chapter Eight, the conclusion, includes the major findings, the significance of this study and suggestions for further research.

SECTION I

PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN THE MALDIVES: CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER TWO

EDUCATION PROVISION IN A SMALL ISLAND: HISTORIES MATTER

2.0 Introduction

This chapter addresses an important contextual dimension of this study; namely the recent history of education provision in the Maldives. This involves a descriptive account of the Maldives as the context in which leadership is placed in, and provides the basis for establishing both the unique context of the Maldives from which to understand school leadership, and reflects on the organisational patterns for schools by using Weick's (1976) theory of strong and weakly coupled systems. It starts with a brief history of the Maldives (in 2.1), followed by an account of disparity between the Capital Island and the Outer Atolls (in 2.2), and a discussion placing primary schools in a contemporary political, social and economic context in (2.3). In the third part, an account of school leadership in Male' (in 2.4) and a descriptive summary of leadership of schools in Male' is presented, followed by an account of the organization of the Ministry of Education (in 2.5). Finally a conclusion is presented in 2.6

2.1 A Brief History of the Maldives

Very little has been written on the development of education in the Maldives, although accounts are emerging which are invaluable (cf. Anvar, 2008). Documents accessible to the public are usually those written by consultants for UN agencies, for the World Bank, or those found in overseas university libraries written by Maldivians who pursue higher education abroad as a partial requirement for their qualification (see, Ali, 2006; UNDAF, 2002)

There is literally no information available prior to the conversion of the people to Islam in 1153. The actual situation or the true facts of the development of education have never been clearly stated by either the National Centre for Linguistic and Historical Research or by the eminent people writing on the development of education in the Maldives. Moreover, a collection of isolated, ad hoc events or activities have been overstated and over- stressed to impress and mislead the people.

There was no sign of general education in the Maldives until the time of Mohamed Ameen Didi (17/3/1944 – 22/10/1953) as the ruler. It can be claimed that the masses of the Maldivian people were uneducated illiterates totally unaware of the widespread enlightenment being experienced elsewhere in the world, including their closest neighbor, Sri Lanka (see Shihab, 1997). However, some elements of moral and religious education has been acknowledged by other historians (see, Ahmed, 1978).

Although the Maldivan historians and writers claim that the conversion of the people to Islam is the genesis of education in the Maldives (see Ahmed Manik, 1978 ; Jameel 1985), officially in1153AD (548H), there is no evidence to suggest any formal education activities took place following the religious conversion.

In his PhD thesis, Luthufi, (2004) identifies four phases or stages of development of education in the Maldives: a) the period of traditional religion-based education (1153-1940s), which started with Maldivians converting to Islam from Buddhism and accepting Islam as their religion in 1153; b) the period of the community schools system (1940 -1950s); c) the period of the English medium of education 1961 to date, 2008), and d) the period of Universal Primary Education (UPE) (1979 to date).

The traditional system consisted of children gathering in homes called 'edhuruge' to learn the Holy Quran, Dhivehi Language, the Arabic script and to learn to recite the Noble. This period is also associated with the enlightenment of great scholars and educators, such as Al Sheikh Al Allama Mohamed Jamaaludhdheen Vaadhoo

Dhanna Kaleygefaan, (see Mohamed, 2003; Saeed, 1994; Shafeeq, 1998), Huvadhoo Aboobakuru Fadiyaaru Thakurufaanu, Mohamed Shamsudhdheen (Addoo Bodu Fadiyaary Thakurufaanu) and Fuahmulaku Dhoondigamu Eduru Kaleygefaanu. (see Jameel-Didi, 1985). However, these scholars and their followers delivered only religious education.

The first challenge to this traditional system occurred in 1927 with the establishment of the first government school, Al Saniyya in Male' (see Mohamed, 2003; NCLHR, 2001; Shihab, 1991b; Jameel-Didi, 1985). This school was first limited to the education of boys, but later in 1944, a section was opened for girls and young women. Instruction in this school covered Dhivehi language, Islam, Arabic and Arithmetic. Under the leadership of the President of the nation's First Republic, significant educational development took place in the 1940's and early 1950's. By 1945, each inhabited island had a traditional school (makthab) providing instruction at the lower primary level (see, Ahmed-Manik, 1978; and Hussain, 1977b). Thus, it can be argued that it was Mohamed Ameen Didi who introduced universal primary education for the first time in the history of the Maldives (Mohamed, 2003; NCLHR, 2001). He also made primary education compulsory and set up mechanisms to provide learning materials and uniforms for children from poor families (see, Anwar, 2008). Another development was the introduction of secondary level education. A secondary level school called Atoll School was set up on the capital island of each atoll for the children from the island schools who qualified for secondary education, thus laying the foundation of secondary education for the first time in the Maldives (ibid)

A dramatic change in the education system occurred in 1960 when the government introduced two English medium schools in Male' as part of a conscious effort to prepare its citizens to meet the increasing development needs of the nation. However, this resulted in two distinct education systems existing side by side, and as result, the traditional system was relegated to a second-level status. Until recently, however, government schooling was concentrated in Male'.

The most recent historic development in education in the Maldives occurred in 1978, with the decision to move to a unified national education system and to promote a more equitable distribution of facilities and resources. The policy was based around providing Universal Basic Education for All (EFA). Strategies involved the formulation of a unified curriculum for Grades 1-7, improvement of teacher training, and the establishment and upgrading of new schools in the atolls. Two government schools, one Atoll Education Center (AEC) and one Atoll School (AS), were established in each atoll. Today, these schools represent what is available in terms of basic education for children in their local communities/islands.

Recent educational development of the country has been characterized by rapid increases in enrollment and the number of educational institutions. During this period, the provision of basic education has remained the main priority of the sector for a number of years, with many schools being newly constructed, a national curriculum introduced, and text books and teacher guides developed for all basic education (1-7).

School enrolment has risen rapidly in primary and secondary schools (from 15,000 in 1978 to 101,081 in 1999) and education's share of total government expenditure in the last 5 years has been an annual average of 11.4 percent(see, MoE, 1999c:19). Access to primary (grades 1-5) has been universalized.

2.2 Disparity between the Capital Island and the Outer Atolls

The disproportionate growth of Male', the capital, relative to the other atolls is an issue of major concern. Between 1974 and 1990, Male's share of the population increased from 13% to 26%, due primarily to domestic migration from the atolls supplemented by the employment of expatriates. Inward migrants are estimated to be 48% of Male's population. The relatively better employment opportunities and education and health care facilities are the major reasons for this migration. Until recently, the only secondary education provision was limited to Male'. In 1989, 42%

of enrolment in schools in Male' were atoll children (see, MoE, 1999c:19). In 55% of these cases, large families had also migrated to Male'. Many of them also came seeking employment within the government and through private business in and around Male'. The remaining 45 % of these students stayed with relatives or friends as Male' has no residential school facilities despite this pressure (Ali, 2006).

Government schools in the capital's island are better resourced and have had a more favourable development history than that of the schools in the outer islands (MoE, 1995). In 1960, the government introduced English as the medium of instruction in government schools in the capital, and trained expatriate teachers were recruited to teach in English. At that time, there were three government schools all located in Male'. One of them was a pre-school based on the Montessori model, while the other two were single sex schools based on the British grammar school model, which provided education from grade 1 to grade 10 (covering primary and secondary education). At the end of secondary school, students were required to sit for the London University Ordinary Level Examinations. Teachers came largely from Sri Lanka and England.

From this time onwards, and as a result of the introduction of the English medium education in Male' government schools, a deep rift grew between the schools system of the capital in Male', and those of the rest of the country. The communities on the outer islands were left to get on with their traditional form of education while the grammar school-based education in the English medium was available only for those born in the capital, Male', or rich enough to live there. The justification for this was that these schools were said to be educating those who would take on a position of authority in the governance of the country for building a better future (Luthfi, 2004).

In the past 25 years, and due to the government's involvement in education across the country, people's hopes have been raised and there has been an expectation that schools in the outer islands would be enabled to provide the same education as that of government schools in Male'. However, schools in Male' continue to be better

resourced than those in the outer islands as they are relatively well-funded by the government, while the heads of schools in Male' get the chance to propose their own budget to the Ministry of Finance unlike hundreds of schools in the outer islands. Thus, they have their own budgets and authorised funds are allocated directly to the schools by the government, although the approval of the Ministry of Education is a requirement on the part of the school head with respect to school expenses. In comparison, even to this day, schools in the outer islands continue to be poorly resourced. The MoE identifies how much each school in the island can get and this budget is sent to the island office to be passed onto the school in parts and at their discretion. How the MoE decides on the allocation of money is not disclosed (see Ali, 2006). The government funding goes towards the upkeep of school buildings, on salaries, and there is some contribution made towards the payment of electric and telephone bills.

There are two distinct systems existing side-by-side for two different categories of people. For those in the urban centres, the government provides education with better facilities and resources for both primary and secondary levels. In the atoll schools, in contrast, the government's contribution is small and the standard is poor, with provision only up to grade 7. Pupils are then compelled to move onto urban centres for their secondary education. There is an advantage, therefore, to being born in the capital. Pupils who come from schools outside the capital are required to sit for an entrance examination to get admission to government secondary schools in Male'. If they fail, they have to secure a seat in a fee paying private school, where the academic standards and the quality and quantity of the resources are lower. The disadvantages for those born outside the capital continue to deepen inequalities, although steps are being taken by the government to provide some education for all.

The superior quantity and quality of education in Male' compared with the atolls is a major economic, social and equity issue. The causes and impact of this disproportionate division of educational opportunities extend beyond the education sector and relate to economic and social issues.

Yet at the same time, and as discussed in parts 2 and.3 below, there is a growing concern over the quality of schooling provided in Male. Unlike those who live in the outer islands, the people who live in Male' carry an overwhelming political weight as the elite community of the country. Ironically, despite the public concern, there is no sign of any systematic review or assessment of the effectiveness of the schools or their improvement, although there is pressure to address the issue of 'quality education' and a growing recognition of the need to improve the quality of education in national policy documents (see, 6th and 5th NDP, Maldives.

Given the situation, this study seeks to address the issue of school leadership and those practices that have implications for schooling and effectiveness (see, Leithwood, 2005).

2.3 Placing Primary Schools in a Contemporary Political, Social and Economic Context

The Republic of Maldives is an archipelago of 1190 coral islands situated in the Indian Ocean, approximately 670 kilometres south west of Sri Lanka. The *archipelago* covers about 90,000 square kilometres of ocean but the land area is limited to less than 300 square kilometres. The islands are grouped into 24 natural atolls, which for the purposes of administration, are grouped into 19 units also called "atolls". Of the total 1,200, only about 200 are inhabited, while 67 islands have a population less than 500 and only 30% of the islands have a population of more than 1,000 (see, MPND, 2005).

With an estimated total population of 259 thousand (1997), the Maldives is classified as a developing country with GNP per capita of US $ 1180 (1997) (see, Windham, 1997). It has a young population that enjoys a population growth that is among the highest in the world, which is a major problem. The implications of such a rise for the education sector are manifested through increased enrolment and demands for more school buildings, teachers and educational material. A significant demographic

feature in the Maldives is the afore-mentioned youthful population, where close to a third is in school, and therefore, demand for education is strong and rising (see, table 2.1). The increasing population density, especially in the capital, Male' (where 25.5% of the total lives) is also a matter of concern (ibid).

The Maldives has shown impressive economic growth in the past 15 years, where the real GDP, through the expansion of mainly fisheries and tourism and associated services, grew by nearly 9 per cent per year during the 1980s. The trend then slowed to an average annual rate of 8.3 per cent during the period 1990-1995 (MPND, 2005). This phenomenon has produced significant improvements in the standard of living despite a rise in population of 2.8% in the last five years (ibid).

The Maldives's education system faces a number of difficulties which challenge its effectiveness. The large number of widely dispersed, small, island populations greatly increases the cost of providing educational services and the necessary infrastructure. Indeed, the inherent constraints imposed by distant and small populations adversely affect the provision of infrastructure facilities and services. Furthermore, transport within the Maldives is expensive due to the distances involved, while development is seriously constrained by a lack of qualified manpower. Another factor is that although the country has a high literacy rate and has nearly universalised primary education, there is an acute shortage of people whose educational attainment is above the basic levels of literacy and numeracy (see, Windham, 1997).

Recent educational development of the country is characterized by a rapid increase in enrolment and the number of educational institutions and the provision of basic education has remained the main priority of the sector for a number of years. In this respect, many schools have been newly-constructed, a national curriculum has been introduced, while textbooks and teacher guides have been developed for all the basic education grades (grades 1-7).

School enrolment has risen rapidly (from 15,000 in 1978 to 60,001 in 1999) and education's share of total Government expenditure in the last 5 years has been an

annual average of 11.4 per cent (MoE, 2007). Access to primary education (grades 1-5) has been universalised, and present plans for education emphasise the universalisation of 7 years of basic education, expansion of secondary education, strengthening educational management information systems, increasing curricular relevance, establishing national capacity for secondary teacher and post- secondary education, and the strengthening of partnerships with parents and the community to support educational expansion and development. Tables 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 illustrate the expansion of schools, student enrolments and teachers.

School information	Private	Govt	Atoll	Male'	Total
Primary	4	204	198	6	208
Secondary	8	180	172	16	188
Higher secondary	1	37	34	4	38

Table 2.1 School Information (Source: MOE, 2010)

Student Enrolment	**Atolls**			**Male'**			
	Govt	Private	Total	Govt	Private	Total	**Total**
Primary	33041	40	33081	10727	549	11276	44357
Secondary	18695	-	18695	4407	2895	7303	25997
Higher Secondary	1380	-	1380	1773	91	1864	3244
Total	**53116**	**40**	**53156**	**16907**	**3535**	**20442**	**72618**

Table 2.2 Student Enrolment in 2009 (Source: MOE, 2010)

Teachers	Trained		Untrained		
	Local	Expat	Local	Expat	Total trained and untrained
Republic	3358	2734	6092	764	6856
Atolls	2479	2225	4683	706	5388
Male'	900	509	1409	59	1468

Table 2.3 Teachers in 2009 (Source: MOE, 2010)

The MOE works directly under the president of the Republic. The Minister of Education is assisted by a Deputy Minister who receives policy advice from the National Education Council and the Advisory committee on basic Education. The Ministry of Education is responsible for education of its citizens in the Republic; specifically the provision and supervision of state education, formulation of education policy and design of the curriculum content, development of syllabi and preparing teaching materials, training teachers, registering and supervising educational institutions and computing education statistics, and holding examinations and awarding certificates

Nevertheless, with the recent political reforms and introduction of a party system of governance in the country in the year 2008, rapid changes have taken place in terms of public service management. The most dramatic event has been a process of democratisation involving public services, which has had immediate implications for the education system and schools in general. For instance, there have been new initiatives on the part of the government to extend the role of parents and teachers in the management of schools by introducing school boards, comprising parent representatives, members of the community and teachers with the school principal as the head (see, School Circular, 2009/Jan). These school boards have already formulated a working framework to improve the management and administration of

schools and as the boards have started functioning, the government have allowed space for schools to run their own programmes and activities. The Ministry has thus already devolved the power to the school boards, and all the functions previously carried out by the Ministry are now done by them and the principal. In this respect, the Ministry does provide policy guidelines and a financial grant for schools, however, these changes are yet not fully embraced by all schools as some boards have not become active, and therefore, these schools need to remain under the supervision of the government body.

Interestingly, some people feel ambivalent about these developments, and critics argue that the changes are not genuine, and therefore, can be unsustainable in the long run.

2.4 Schools and Leadership – Male'

The six school-heads selected for this study are based in primary schools in Male', home to over a third of the country's population, 300, 000 (MNPD, 2005). Five of the school heads of schools are qualified primary teachers who were trained locally while one head teacher holds a secondary teacher training qualification. None of these school heads have had any leadership training although they may have undertaken short courses abroad on teaching and supervision. They were appointed to the position based on personal achievements in their career from primary school teacher to supervisor and then onto becoming assistant principal/principal (see, biographies in appendix B)

With the exception of one school, the primary schools in Male' all have a short history, as these institutions are recent developments. The first government primary school was established in 1961, along with the introduction of English medium education in Male' (Luthufi, 2004). The other five primary schools were more recent establishments that occurred between 1979 and 2000 (ibid). These five schools emerged as part of the recent development of education in the Maldives. This

includes launching the program of universal primary education and the introduction of a unified curriculum for primary schools across the country (Luthufi, 2004). According to Luthufi (2004), structural changes occurred across the school system during this time. These included the way schools were administered and managed, where the Ministry of Education imposed a more directive and instructional role in the management and administration of the schools (ibid). Accordingly, the school heads were provided with curriculum guidelines and specific instructions to run their schools while text books were developed by the Ministry of Education. Staff recruitment, teacher appraisal, school finance and maintenance of school building are examples among many others, of areas of responsibility which became functions of the Ministry of Education (ibid). The role of the school head is confined to a job description that includes responsibility for the day to day managing of the school. A detailed account of the organisation of the Ministry of Education is described in the following section so as to offer an overview of the nature of the operation of the system in which the school heads run their schools.

2.5 Organization of the Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the education of its citizens. Specifically, this means responsibility for the provision of state education, the formulation of education and policy and design of the curriculum content, the development of syllabi and preparing teaching materials, training teachers, registering and supervising educational institutions and computing education statistics and holding examinations and awarding certificates.

The MOE works directly under the president of the Republic. The Minister of Education is assisted by Deputy Ministers. The Minister receives policy guidelines from the National Education Council and Advisory Committee on basic Education. Figure 2.1 illustrates the organizational structure. The structure of the education system in the Maldives can be best described in terms what Weick, (1976) refers as a *tightly coupled system*. He describes schools as either loosely or tightly coupled

systems. According to Weick, (1976) loosely coupled school systems have many spheres of influence which maintain degrees of autonomy and decisional discretion. The schools have considerable local determination with few lateral linkages among units and less dependency, and less control from the centre. He argues that the school comprises groups or systems that are attached, whilst retaining some identity and separateness among them. These groups include teachers, parents, students, and various other stakeholders who form a part of the whole system.

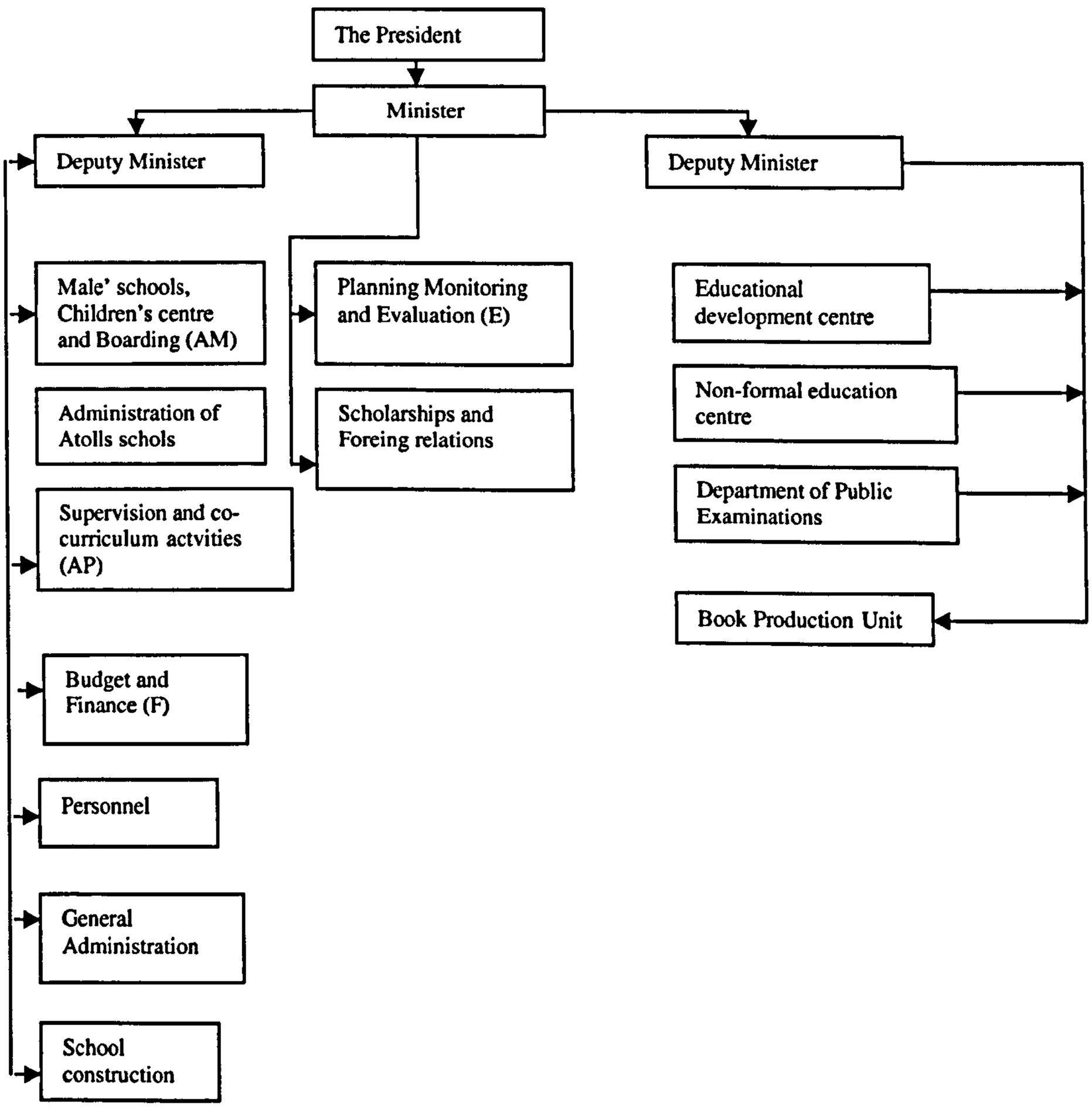

Figure 2.1 The Structure of the Educational System.

Furthermore, Weick (1976) suggests such groups may share common goals while working independently to realise them. In this respect, if there are fewer variables to share between and among the groups, then it is described as relatively loosely-coupled. The more the variables are shared by the systems (groups), the less it is loosely–coupled.

As referred to earlier, the schools in the Maldives operate in a tightly coupled structure (see Figure 2.1). The findings of this study suggest school principals implement an education agenda that is prescribed by the Ministry and have limited space to accommodate diverse micro-level interests.

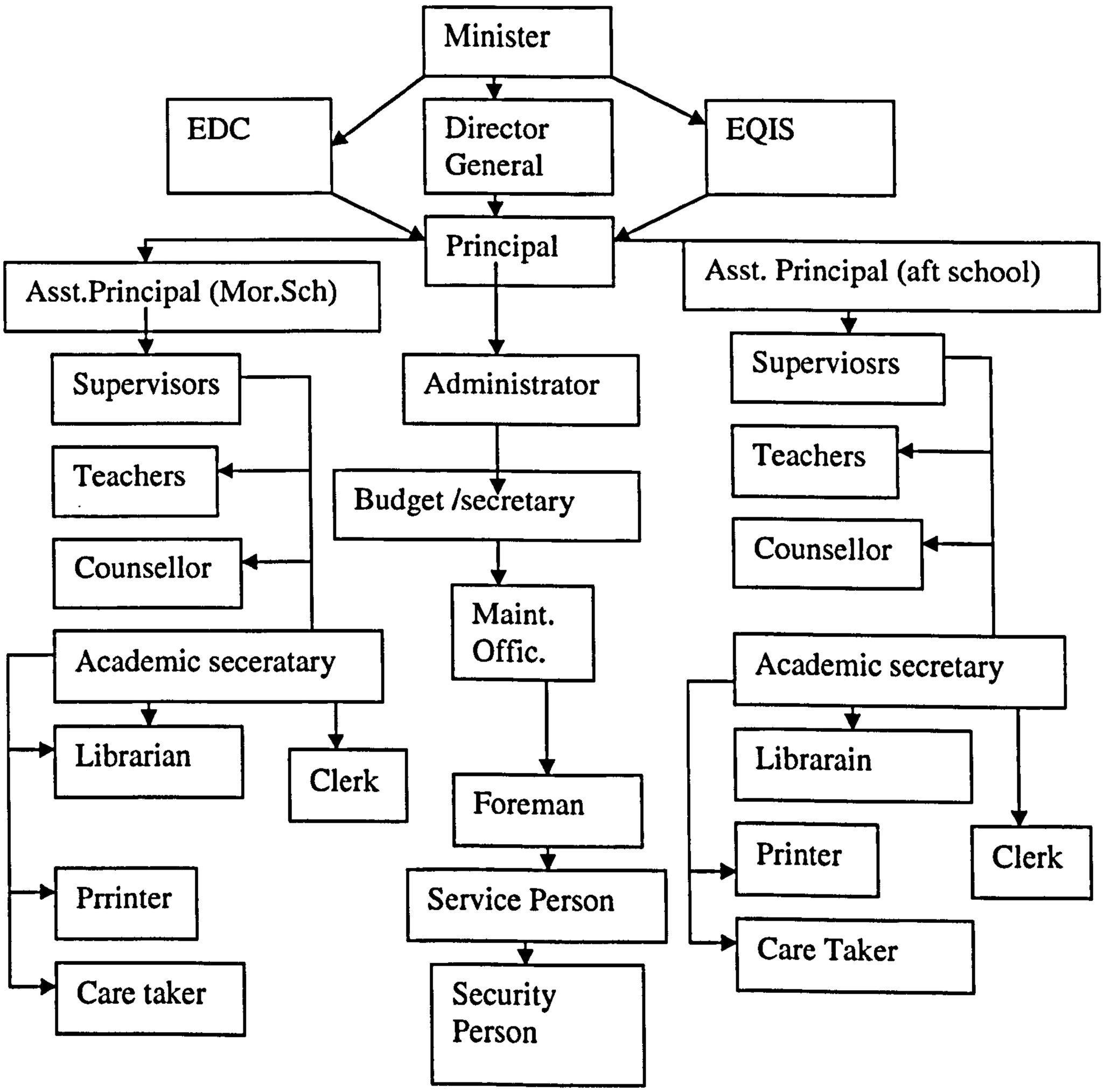

Figure 2.2: Organization Chart of a Primary School

The interests of individual members of the organisation (school) or even other stakeholders are not well-heeded. Priorities are determined by the authorities and following them is obligatory to all the staff under the bureaucratic impositions. The interest and grievances of staff and concerns of parents are largely stifled or delayed in the process. Thus, the effectiveness of the schools under such a system is questionable; particularly with the rapid socio -political changes that are taking place in the society today.

As shown in Figure 2.2, the schools are highly centralized and the principals follow direct instructions from the Director General who is responsible for the administration of schools in Male'. These include advice on academic and administrative and financial matters. The school principals undertake the responsibilities with the assistance of school administrator. The administrator attends to the budgetary and maintenance tasks with the guidance from the school head, while the assistant principals support the academic programs of the school. Further, the principals follow instructions on curriculum issues from Educational Development Centre (EDC), and are guided on matters of supervision and evaluation by the Evaluation and Quality Improvement Section (EQIS). Thus the schools are closely directed and monitored by the Ministry of Education.

Table 2.1 provides a list of tasks and responsibilities of a school principal based on a recent job description. Although the structure provides head teachers with authority and power over the staff of the school, the school heads are confined to tasks and responsibilities prescribed by the authorities on a day to day basis.

The school heads undertake a prescriptive leadership akin to the Goodson's (1985) description of 'prescriptive leadership'. He asserts that prescriptive leadership has two faces; leaders themselves are prescribed to and thereby have their missions defined elsewhere by other hands, while; leaders who are prescribed to tend to prescribe to others in turn, the teachers and administrators who work in their schools. Nobody has 'ownership' of their domain and the result is a pervasive sense of drift

disorientation, demoralization and dissatisfaction among the staffs in schools (Goodson, 1985).

Tasks /Responsibilities
Preparation of the school time-table according to the Ministry's instructions and specifications
Allocate teachers to the classes in accordance with their abilities and aptitudes
Plan and allocate work to the teachers, supervisors and assistant principals, and administrative staff
Monitor and supervise the work of the deputy heads/asst. principals, supervisors, and administrative staff
Monitor the work of the teachers to ensure that they cover the curriculum areas specific in the syllabi in accordance with the time frames determined by the Ministry.
Work towards creating a conducive, learning environment in the school
Identify students with disabilities and maintain records of such students
Plan and conduct learning programs for students with learning disabilities, and work closely with their parents to enhance the effectiveness of such programs.
Establish and maintain an information system which would enable and enhance the effectiveness and efficiency
Maintain personal conduct among staff and the students in accordance with the Ministry's expectations
Conduct regular meetings with the academic and administrative staff , and maintain the records of the meetings
Work towards maintaining and enhancing better relations with the public
Utilize the available resources wisely
Maintain the school enrolment and other related logs of the school
Work closely with School Board and the Parent Teacher Association
Visit classrooms and provide guidance and support to the teachers
Provide necessary data and information to the Ministry in terms of teacher requirements and other school needs
Manage the school funds according to the instructions and specifications of the Ministry
Prepare annual report and submit it to the Ministry
Attend to students and teachers and other staff discipline issues in accordance with the Ministry's instructions
Attend to parents' concerns
Attend to Ministry's meetings
Attend to day to day corresponding, and other related tasks

Table 2.4: Task Responsibilities for School Heads

School Head's job description which I have outlined in Table 2.1 demonstrates the limits and constraints of school principals to act as effective managers or leaders. Thus school heads do not have the responsibility for the major decisions such as staffing, staff development, and curriculum matters. Such decisions are not devolved to the school level where the decisions are implemented. Education system in Male'

is a bureaucratic one where the leadership decisions are taken at the top and the financial resources are controlled centrally. The school heads follow Ministry's instructions and guidelines to run the schools, and have limited authority over the affairs of schooling.

Nevertheless, with the expansion of primary education and the rapid pace of socio-political changes that are taking place in the country, the Maldivian government is finding difficult to sustain the existing polices and the ways in which schools are administered and managed. Having worked in the system for many years I note the amount of public pressure on the authorities and the school management to improve the quality of schooling. Parents constantly complain about the poor quality of teachers and the outdated school curriculum. Demand is also growing for more active leadership role on the part of the school head to change the schools and to deliver quality schooling that provides essential knowledge and skills for a changing society.

Given the situation, the schools have become more complex institutions. The school heads are finding harder to manage the schools with the increased responsibilities and role expectations on the part of their job. Day–to–day challenges are fraught with anxiety and tension. These tensions exist as part of fulfilling bureaucratic obligations and meeting the demands and expectations of the teachers and parents of the students, teachers and the parents. The situations in the schools seem to reflect more recent social and economic development of the country.

2.6 Conclusion

The analysis of this chapter provides some background to suggest that the education system in the Maldives lacked the ability to address the needs of the schools in particular providing relevant sources and conditions for its headship to exercise effective leadership. A part of the problem seems to be the bureaucratic and overly centralized nature of the system. It is argued here that with the expansion of education system, and with an agenda of streamlining primary education, the

government has taken over many of the school functions that were traditionally enjoyed by school heads. These include some margin for discretion over curriculum, staff recruitment and the general administration of the school. It is within this context, this study attempts to reveal the stories of the incumbent schools heads to describe how they imagine their role, and the ways in which they practice headship, with a particular focus on their management in an environment that on the one hand is tightly coupled to the Ministry and on the other hand it is pressured to develop quality education to meet the demands of local communities.

The following chapter is designed to justify the choice of methodology adopted in this study. It provides an account of researcher's philosophical position and the approach that guided this study, followed by a discussion of research strategy, the procedures of data collection and analysis and related issues of ethics.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Research Design and Methodology

This chapter outlines the researcher's philosophical position, methodology and the methods of data collection, including a justification over the choice of the methodology adopted in the study. It also explores the main philosophical positions and associated approaches found in the literature to guide this study, and as a basis for framing the overall approach to the study.

This study adopts a broad qualitative strategy drawing on a biographical approach to inquiry. It includes a discussion of biographical data, the procedures of data collection, and the analysis followed by the discussion of the validity of the findings.

3.1 Philosophical and Theoretical Assumptions

According to Creswell (2007) the research process in qualitative research begins with philosophical assumptions that inquirers make in deciding to undertake a qualitative study. These include ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (how the researcher knows what she or he knows), axiology (the role of values in the research), rhetorical (the language of research, and methodological assumptions (Creswell, 2007). In this regard, the qualitative researcher chooses a stance on each of these assumptions in keeping in mind the need to generate coherence between these philosophical positions. This has practical implications for designing and conducting research.

Creswell (2007) offers four potential paradigms of research for making claims about knowledge. These include post- positivism, constructivism, advocacy/participatory, and pragmatism. The present research tends towards the constructivism paradigm; a view that sees the world as a product of human subjectivity. People define and give meaning to the world through their everyday actions and interactions (Ridley, 2008).

In the paradigm of constructivism,

> Individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences – meanings directed towards certain objects or meanings. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views. The goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation. In terms of practice, the questions become broad and general so that the participants can construct the meaning of situations. The more open-ended the questioning, the better, as the researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life setting. Constructivist researchers also focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants. Researchers make an interpretation of what they find, an interpretation shaped by their own experiences and back ground. The researcher's intent is to make sense (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world (Creswell, 2007:20).

In this regard the role of the researcher is to interpret the complex realities of the phenomenon under examination, clarifying descriptions as to offer the readers with good raw material for their own generalizing (see, Stake, 1995). Thus, in this project I am trying to understand how key informants, in this case head teachers' view and describe 'leadership' practices in their schools, and how these social practices are part of the wider social world.

In this respect what needs to be studied provides the basis for the design of the research – the systematic examination of the phenomenon, data collection and detailed reporting of results. The phenomenon under study here is school leadership as it is practiced by the role incumbents in the Maldives. For the purpose of this study, selected school principals were approached to be a part of this project. Accordingly, a biography was developed for each informant to compile a set of data.

3.2 Research Design

This study has been framed within the assumptions and characteristics of the constructivist approach to research. Using biography as a starting strategy, the following processes were involved in the collection of the data, and to compose individual biographies (using the field data) for the selected participants in this study, which were subsequently the subjects of the analysis.

In this engagement, the three broad phases were covered (see Table 3.1).

Collecting data thorough interviewing	These involved selecting individuals, gaining access and making rapport, recording information, sorting data and compiling and developing individual biographies for the data analysis.
Analyzing the data	Organizing data into categories/ themes, and building the categories and themes into units of information
Eliciting data from documents for validation and triangulation	These includes school, logs, principals' diaries, memos, and minutes of staff meetings

Table 3.1: Phases of Data Collection

Detailed descriptions of the aforementioned processes of research design are provided in the following sections.

3.3 Selecting the Method

The study employed interviews as the prime modes of data collection. My role was to obtain the descriptions and interpretations of others in order to discover and portray the multiple views of individual cases (see, Stake, 1995). According to Stake, (1995) interview is the main road to such descriptions, interpretations and to multiple

realities. It allowed me to probe and gain access to information that may be difficult to reach by using other methods. The interviews are standardized way of learning about people's feelings and thoughts and experience about aspects of their lived everyday life (Rubin and Rubin, 1995; Cohen, et al. 2000).

Based on the above notions, the interview data was primarily used to construct biographies and accounts of six principals - the subjects of this study. Further the biographical data were analyzed using Gardner's (1995) strategy to define individual leadership stories (that included drawing data from the interview transcripts and adapting reflective skills to provide deeper insights into the lives, hope, successes and failures of the leaders). Documentary analysis was used for verification and triangulation purposes. School leadership is a complex and contested term and different individuals are likely to interpret the term differently. Further, leadership practices vary depending on the context and other variables associated with leadership actions. Therefore, it was very important to understand the concept of leadership and related practices from the perspectives of the practitioners. The individual interview (online and face-to-face interviews) allowed the researcher an enormous advantage to deal with the topics in depth and in detail. Due to person to person interaction the quality of data is enhanced (see, Cohen and Manion, 1995; Fountana and Frey 1994; Harvey 1990; Janesick, 1998). The online interviews provided opportunity to go through the chat log and probe further questions later with regard to ambiguous statements or gaining more details on specific issues. Further, the interaction between me and the informants were quite exciting and challenging. Moreover, I found it easy to have the dialogues as I knew the participants personally. All the informants were friends/colleagues with whom I had worked and known for many years. This helped to me to delve into more politically sensitive issues as they trusted me and offered their full cooperation. However, as a friend and also as a colleague I faced some difficulties in eliciting wider perspectives or explanations on issues and topics which were more familiar and generally taken for granted by the principals.

3.4 Being an Insider – Reflexivity

As referred to in the preceding sections, this study has adopted a qualitative approach, and the researcher's role has been both as an insider and outsider. As an insider, and having a worked as a principal over period of fifteen years, I had knowledge that all principals were informed and shared experience. Unlike an outsider with limited practical and experiential knowledge, I had firsthand knowledge of the context and the role. This helped me to detect exaggerations by the school heads when reporting their actions and engagements with regard to their daily activities, and I was able to discern when statements were made to impress me. For example, I was able to note particular exaggerations when some school heads made claims over their intensive engagements in staff development programs and inclusivity of the staff in decision making .Furthermore, my involvement in the subject area helped my confidence in terms of being able to probe, and investigate issues that would not have been otherwise accessible to an outsider as information about public institutions is well- guarded.

As an insider, the place of experiential knowledge and potential for reflection of the researcher is an important dimension and a strategy when conducting social research (see, Bourdieu , 1992). Particularly, this reflexivity in qualitative research is used as a means of discovering and correcting errors which would otherwise remain unseen (ibid). In this respect, my knowledge and experience has been used to develop the research questions and related issues that have been relevant to the study. Similarly, reflexivity has been a significant element in the process of data analysis and reporting, helping me to maintain and sharpen the focus on major themes and topics that emerged in the process of data analysis.

Nevertheless, there have been both advantages and disadvantages of being an insider during this research project. The positive elements include easy access to information, gaining respect, and developing trust and effective working relationships with the participants. As an insider, I was able to avoid significant deviations and report the truth and a comprehensive account of leadership actions and dilemmas that have relevance to the phenomena under investigation. However,

at the same time, the accounts may have also been adversely affected by personal judgments, and things which have been taken for granted on the part of the insider role. Other short-comings include short descriptions and little explanation by the school heads on specific issues and topics where they have assumed that I would not require more detailed accounts.

3.5 Selecting the Instrument

In the first phase of the data collection, online interviews were conducted. The technique was adopted as a result of unavoidable personal circumstances. Specifically, political events in the Maldives made my presence there impossible. Following discussions with my advisor, I decided to press ahead with the study, using new digital technologies as a way of beginning the data collection. Thus, I collected the data and conducted the interviews using internet online conversations (synchronous interviews), e-mail (asynchronous interviews). The collected data was used to develop individual biographies for the purpose of analysis.

Participant	Sex	Nature of the interview	Frequency of the interview
Principal 1	F	Asynchronous + Synchronous Face to face Interviews	Asynchronous (1) + Synchronous (2) Face to face Interviews (2)
Principal 2	M	Asynchronous + Synchronous Face to face Interviews	Asynchronous (1) + Synchronous (2) Face to face Interviews (2)
Principal 3	F	Asynchronous + Synchronous Face to face Interviews	Asynchronous (1) + Synchronous (2) Face to face Interviews (2)
Principal 4	M	Asynchronous + Synchronous Face to face Interviews	Asynchronous (1) + Synchronous (2) Face to face Interviews (2)
Principal 5	F	Face to face Interviews	Face to face Interviews (2)
Principal 6	F	Face to face Interviews	Face to face Interviews (2)

Table 3.2: Scope of Data

However, when the political environment shifted, I was then able to return to the Maldives. This enabled me to move to the second stage of data collection. I made a trip back home to the Maldives and undertook a series of interviews, gather documents from the schools, and undertake informal observations.

The interviews included face-to- face in- depth interviews with all the participants. The documents collected were personal diaries and school logs and minutes of staff meetings over a period of three months. The post interviews were found quite useful to clear ambiguous statements. It also allowed the researcher to develop deeper conversations on issues that were curtailed during the online interviews. This helped to verify and validate the previous data collected. The table below is the range and scope of the data collected.

3. 6 Administration of Research Instrument (Interviewing)

The following steps were undertaken during this study for the purpose of the interview. These included: a) selecting the participants, and communicating and negotiating with them; b) briefing the research aims and objectives, and introduction and presentation of questions; c) recording the responses/ transcribing

Selecting participants

In this study the sources of qualitative data came from the principals who were the primary informants of this study. Although it is practically impossible to involve the subjects concerned in the qualitative data I was fortunate to do with all the primary schools heads in Male'. These people were invited to participate in this study because of their role as practitioners, and as they are the people who are attending to school affairs on a day to day basis. Gaining access was not a major issue as I knew the participants personally and was good friends. Thus building research relationship was also not an issue for me, as trust was already built and the school heads were willing to confide with information I required. It is generally viewed that the quality

of data is dependent on the quality of relationship the interviewer builds with the people to be interviewed.

Initially I approached the participants by e-mails and invited them to take part in the research project. In order to inform the participants I provided information including aims and objectives of the study and assurance of anonymity and confidentiality. The participants responded positively and showed a lot of enthusiasm towards the project and assured their full cooperation. Subsequently, I called them from Bristol over telephone and provided more details and the nature of information required. Moreover, the interview schedules were negotiated over the telephone and emails. The time was decided by the principals as to avoid any inconvenience on the part of their busy schedules. There were two types of schedules that were negotiated over the telephone conversations with the participants. These included the schedules for the online synchronous interviews and the schedules for the asynchronous interview. The questions and probes for the asynchronous interviews were mailed to them as attachments with e-mails followed by the negotiations with the participants.

A second phase of interview was also undertaken in this study. These interviews took place in schools as face-to-face interviews with the participants when I managed to get back to the country. These interviews were conducted in the school offices. The school office was selected for the avenues for the interview because it was convenient for both the participants and me. Secondly, the rooms were fitted with all supplies of information like school charts, tables and many relevant files and rerecords for access. The time was decided by the principal, and the room was comfortable and convenient for the purpose of the engagement.

Interview Process

The first step in the designing of the interview was the formulation of broad overall questions that the study intended to answer. These included questions on leadership, management, leadership responsibilities and practices. The second step was the development of a pool of open –ended questions designed to elicit responses as to

cover the area of research topic in conjunction with the research questions. As a third step, the pool of questions was categorically divided into two templates, namely asynchronous schedule /guide, and synchronous guide.

The questions were in English and the respondents were free to use either Dhivehi or English. The participants responded to the questions and probes both in Dhivehi and English. The interview guides are shown in Appendix A and G. The participants were also given the opportunity to ask questions or seek clarifications on any issues related to the study.

The online synchronous interview-logs were saved as separate files on the computer. The asynchronous responses were received as email attachments from the participants and were also saved a separate files to be used later to develop the individual case studies. The face-to-face interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. All the participants were briefed over what I was going to do with the recorded materials and their consent was elicited prior to the recording. Subsequently, each of the recordings were transcribed and fed to the computer as separate files which were again utilized for the purpose of developing individual case studies for each principal.

Pilot study

Bell (1993) claims that all data gathering instruments should be piloted to enhance effectiveness and offer clear instructions for respondents. Furthermore, literature search reveals that piloting the research instruments is important for several reasons (Janesick, 1998). Firstly, piloting enables the researcher to remove items which do not yield usable data. Secondly, piloting helps in finding out whether the respondents understood and interpreted instructions and questions clearly. Thirdly, piloting helps the researcher to have an insight into the time each respondent may take to complete the questionnaires. Fourthly, piloting instills validity in the instrument as short comings are identified and then rectified. In this study, a questionnaire was employed as an asynchronous interview as part of the data gathering process. Therefore this

questionnaire was prepared and piloted at the very beginning of the data collection. The questions were piloted with Rani (one of the key informants in the study) who was a former colleague of the researcher (a principal), was presented with an outline of the research and was explained the purpose of the study. The particular principal was chosen on the base of trust that the request would be fulfilled with integrity. The discussion was held as an online conversation with the colleague. Following this, a set of asynchronous interview schedules was sent to the informant to collect data for the trial. In this way, the first trial based interview (both synchronous and asynchronous) came to materialize within weeks. The questions (synchronous and face-to-face) that were framed to incorporate the semi-structured interviews appear in appendix A, and the questions framed in the asynchronous interview schedule appear in the Appendix G. These question frames and documentary data and the sources of the information were coded for the purpose of analysis (see, Appendix F)

The following modifications were made to the interview schedule as a result of the pilot study: (a) some questions were re-worded in order to avoid ambiguity; and, (b) questions were shortened and some questions were excluded.

3.7 Documentary Sources

Documentary analysis was another research instrument used in this study. According to Macmillan and Schumacher (1997), personal and official documents are two types of artifacts produced by educational institutions that can be used in research. A wide range of documents including school logs, personal diaries, minutes of meetings, and memos were investigated in this study. Maintaining school logs is an administrative duty of the school head and therefore the materials were readily available for examination. The logs contained daily activities of the school and the heads' engagements with respect to their leadership and management tasks. The personal diaries contained records of appointments and a priority of list of tasks or engagements (e.g. schedule of meetings), specific instructions from the Ministry, parents' complaints, and student issues, important notes such as telephone numbers,

addressees. The minutes of meetings contained discussions held periodically which includes general instructions for teachers, up-coming activities and programs, disciplinary matters, teachers' grievances. The rationale for using these documents was verifying and understanding information gained from the interviewed data. According to Adams and Schvaneveldt (1997), the historical perspectives help the researcher to understand the chains of events and processes and to assess the linkages or consequences of events. In other words, reflection on the past, in this case exposing the school heads leadership engagements over a period of time provided me insight into their frame of mind and routines and practices. In this study the documents from the sites helped the researcher to verify and confirm or disconfirm the data gathered from the interviews.

I collected the documents on my visits to schools. There was no difficulty in obtaining the materials as the participants were quite willing to offer their support and assistance in the project. The following documents were collected for the purpose of analysis.

a) School logs – 4 Jan 2007 to 6 Apr 2007

b) School academic and activity calendars 2006, 2007

c) Dairies of the principals 2006/2007

d) Job descriptions of the principals (2007)

e) Minutes of staff meetings / and senior management meetings (2006/2007)

3.8 Data Analysis.

In this study, data from the individual biographies were analyzed on the participants' definitions of leadership, leadership practices, leadership dilemmas, ways of dealing the dilemmas and recognized leadership skills. Table 3.3 provides the core questions and the associated data and modes of the analysis.

The responses from the cases were divided into four categories. These include:

1) the participants' interpretations of the terms of leadership and management;
2) leadership practices;
3) leadership dilemmas; and
4) ways of dealing with the dilemmas.

	Research question	Participants	Data	Analysis
1	What do principals understand by the concept of leadership?	All (six) primary school principals	Interviews/case study (qualitative)	Looking for common themes, patterns
2	What do the principal describe their school leadership practices?	All (six) primary school principals	Interviews/case study, Documents- School logs, Memos, (qualitative)	Looking for categories, common themes, patterns.
3	Are there any differences between their conceptions and practices?	All (six) primary school principals	Interviews/case study (qualitative)	Looking for common themes, patterns
4	If there are any differences how do the school heads manage their differences	All (six) primary school principals	Interviews/case study (qualitative)	Looking for common themes, patterns.

Table 3.3: Research Questions and Mode of Data Collection.

The process of data analysis in this study involved reading all the responses from the interviewed materials which were later constructed to form into individual biographies. The responses were sorted and grouped according to 5 categories mentioned above. In order to bring meaning from the responses, attention was paid to the similarities and differences of the participants responses on each category. The responses that were similar and different were each grouped together in order to develop a pattern or a connection around leadership definitions, practices and conflicts. For example definitions of leadership that were similar grouped together in order to form a significant pattern of responses, while isolated responses were also recorded. Special attention was given to the number of incidences and intensity of specific responses in order to get some sense of how prevalent a particular line of

thought among the responses in each category. The data was then interpreted in order to explain the meaning, for example, the term 'leadership', which emerged from the data. and the implications of the data for the research questions of this study. Then conclusions were drawn about the perceptions of the participants.

In order to undertake the aforementioned analysis the researcher utilized Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework for analyzing qualitative data. According to them data analysis consists of three main activities. These include data reduction, data display and conclusion, drawing and verification. These three activities were instrumental in analyzing the data for this study.

3.9 Data Reduction

This activity is about reducing the collected qualitative data to manageable proportions. This is an important and necessary task for the researcher because of the amount of qualitative data that gets collected in the field or at the site. The process involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in field notes or transcriptions (Miles and Huberman, 1994). It is carried out through several iterations of reduction methods, including coding, memo writing and preparing session summary sheets (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Punch 2005; Robson 2002).

In this study reductions were carried out mainly through the development of matrixes, and coding. In this study the procedures that were used to collect the data also served as data reduction procedures in the following way. First, participants' responses to the questions appeared as sentences or phrases during the on-line conversations and asynchronous interviews. These conversations and the asynchronous interview data were later tabulated in matrixes to generate the common themes and patterns. Second, all generated ideas were prioritized and used to develop individual biographies for each participant. Third, the nature of the research questions made coding simple as the codes corresponded with the answers to the

questions. For example, the responses to RQ1 were coded as definitions and understanding of leadership RQ 2 were coded actions, and responses RQ 3 were coded dilemmas and RQ4 was how principals go about dealing with their problems.

3.10 Data Display

This involved organizing, compressing and assembling information (Punch, 2005). According to Robinson (2002), data displays are very important because they provide a researcher with a feel for the data that can tell him/her what justifiable conclusions can be drawn and what further analyses are called for. Data displays may appear in the form of matrices, net works, graphs, and charts (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In this study the data were displayed in the form of matrices which were drawn from the biographies presented in Appendix B. The first matrix involves displaying data on leadership definitions/their perspective and understanding. The second matrix displays data on leadership actions, and finally the third matrix presents leadership constraints. Thus computer generated matrices were employed for the purpose of data display and drawing and verifying conclusions. For the purpose of clarification the primary matrices are illustrated in Table 3.4.

Principal	**Leadership – Definitions**	**Themes/patterns**	**Comments/explanation**
Rani	Getting people together and guiding them towards a particular direction, having a personal vision and working towards personal and collective goals, decision making, possessing qualities such a role modeling, charisma, dedication, being resourceful , and promoting democratic values (RAI,RI1, RI2)	Vision, goals, values , decision making	Notions presented in leadership literature and leadership models, Personal goals, values
Kab	Having a vision, and the capacity to plan and achieve that vision with the help of other team members, decision making (KAI,KI1,	Vision, values, decision making	Reflects notions of leadership models Personal goals and values

	KI2))		
Buddy	Having a vision and planning, delegating, and evaluation, utilising available resources to achieve institutional and personal goals, motivating and inspiring subordinates/followers, decision making, having qualities such a s considerate, charisma, fairness, good judgment,- and maintaining relationship with others (BAI, BI1, BI2).	Vision, goals, HRM skills, decision making, values	HRM and leadership literature. Personal values, goals
Sithi	Possessing certain qualities such as determination and perseverance were qualities, guiding others and promoting democratic values, and having a vision and working to achieving it with and through people it. Planning, setting goals and providing guidance. (SAI, SI1, SI2)	Values, goals, HRM skills	HRM skills and values and goals, reflects notions from leadership lit.
Dhonbe	Being a role model, to have a vision and conveying that vision to the staff and bringing them on board to work towards the vision. (DnAI, DnI1, DnI2)	Values, vision,	Leadership models, personal goals and values
Dhavoodh	Leading, guiding and team building to attain organizational goals, the capacity to set collective goals towards a shared vision , possessing qualities such as having strong personality, charisma, tolerance, and perseverance, being a role model (DAI, DI1, DI2).	Goals, values, HRM skills	Leadership models, personal goals and values

Principal	**Leadership -Actions**	**Themes/patterns**	**Comments/explanation**
Rani	Monitoring teachers work, counselling teachers and students, Motivating staff and students, eliciting cooperation towards collective goals, promoting team work, making parents and teachers happy, sharing ideas with others and talking to people (teachers and	Monitoring, motivating, promoting team work, establishing relationships Counseling	Bureaucratic obligations, Personal values , aspirations/ Managerial activities

	parents), walking around the school (RAI,RI1, RI2).		
Kab	Maintaining a suitable working relationship and eliciting their cooperation, planning and organising school activities(KAI,KI1, KI2).	Eliciting cooperation Planning Organising	HRM activities
Buddy	Attending to the day to day activities of the school (implementing official policies and objectives), communicating school goals and establishing relationship with parents, teachers and students (BAI, BI1, BI2)	Administering, communicating, establishing relationships	Bureaucratic obligations/following ministry's instructions,
Sithi	Organizing, monitoring and attending to the day to day activities of the school. Promoting team work, building relationships with parents, teachers, community and officials at the MoE. decision-making and staff consultation (SAI, SI1, SI)	Monitoring, promoting team work, building relationships, decision making	Following Ministry's instructions/ Managerial activities
Dhonbe	Attending to paper work, finance, office administration, maintenance, monitoring, supervision and evaluation of teaching and learning (DnAI, DnI1, DnI2).	Monitoring, supervision, evaluating	Managerial activities
Dhavoodh	Team building, planning and organizing school programs and activities, creating a friendly environment in the school for the students, the staff and the parents, dealing with grievance of staff and attending to parents complaints., organizing and conducting regular meetings on policy implementation, setting up mechanisms to monitor the progress of individuals and group work, and providing feedback and support(DAI, DI1, DI2)..	Team building, organising, Planning Establishing relationships Communicating Monitoring, Providing feedback	Managerial activities/ HRM activities

Principal	**Leadership constraints**	**Themes/patterns**	**Comments/explanation**

Rani	Undue expectations of the parents, and pressure to meet the demands of the teachers and parents under constrained circumstances, external pressure upon work, bureaucracy, lack of autonomy over academic aspects such school curriculum staff development, staff appraisal and learning and teaching programs, quality of teaching staff and concern over staff recruitment procedures (RAI,RI1, RI2).	External pressure, Lack of professional autonomy Sparse resources Demands of teachers	Dilemma / professional autonomy/ bureaucratic obligations/ personal goals and values
Kab	Increasing demands of teachers for their professional development, expectations and demands of parents, and overly obligations to the authorities. Dealing with frustrated teachers, angry parents and impulsive officials. Issues of , many unskilled teachers , increased students in classes, outdated curriculum, and old fashioned pedagogy , Imposed extracurricular activities (KAI,KI1, KI2).	Demands of teachers External pressure High parents expectations Lack of professional autonomy	Dilemma / professional autonomy/ bureaucratic obligations/ personal goals and values
Buddy	Attending to the day to day activities of the school (implementing official policies and objectives), communicating school goals and establishing relationship with parents, teachers and students included public demands for quality schooling, lack of quality teachers, increasing number of students in schools, the existing policies of the Ministry (BAI, BI1, BI2).	Demands of teachers Parents demands and expectations Lack of quality teachers Ministry obligations	Dilemma / professional autonomy/ bureaucratic obligations/ personal goals and values
Sithi	Overly obligations to the authorities, parents' pressure and demands of the students and expectations of the teachers. Lack of time to reflect on her work or	Ministry obligations Parents and teacher demands and, High expectations, Overload, stress	Dilemma / professional autonomy/ bureaucratic obligations/ personal goals and values

	consider personal philosophy (SAI, SI1, SI).		
Dhonbe	Lack of professional autonomy, high expectations of the parents and the authorities over school outcomes with limited resources or means to such ends, teachers are unskilled to produce good outcomes produce good results, but to produce such outcomes, our hands are tied behind; in other words, he did not have sufficient resources and the means for such ends, the class sizes are big (more than 40 in some cases), , the school is run in two shifts, extra activities imposed by the Ministry of education result extra taxation on the part of the teachers. Dealing with unhappy teachers (DnAI, DnI1, DnI2).	Lack of professional autonomy. Parents demands and their expectations Working condition Taxation on teachers Teacher competency Teachers grievances	Dilemma / professional autonomy/ bureaucratic obligations/ personal goals and values
Dhavoodh	Too many managerial tasks, no professional space to exercise his personal vision for the school, a vision, having to implement an outdated curriculum using poor quality teachers with limited resources (DAI, DI1, DI2).	Ministry obligations Stress Lack of professional autonomy Resource constraints, and teacher competency	Dilemma / professional autonomy/ bureaucratic obligations/ personal goals and values

Table 3.4: Leadership Definitions, Actions and Constraints

3.11 Drawing and Verifying Conclusions

The matrices portrayed above provided the basics for drawing conclusions. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest various tactics that may be used to generate meaning from qualitative data. These include noting patterns and themes, trends, clustering, seeing plausibility and making contrasts and comparisons.

In this study, the above approaches were used to study the matrices outlined in Table 3.4. In the first matrix, the frequencies of the responses were examined to understand and identify the notions of leadership, participants understanding and how they construct the meaning of leadership. In the second matrix, the focus was on examining leadership actions and based on the themes and emerging patterns across the cases and to make sense of the participants' practices. The third matrix presents leadership constraints following procedures employed in the previous two matrices. This involved identifying, clustering and coding the emergent themes and patterns to draw and verify conclusions.

3.12 Validity of the Findings

Using the advice of Maxwell (1992) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) on qualitative research, the notion of authenticity is employed for the purpose of validity in this study. According to Maxwell (1992) we, as researchers, are part of the world we are researching, and we cannot be completely objective about that. In this regard our (researchers') own perspectives are as valid as others, and the task of the researcher is to uncover these with confidence Thus, validity then attaches to accounts, and it requires the researcher to report descriptions, events and situations fairly, honestly and accurately as possible. In this study, I made a commitment to maintain accuracy, and present true accounts of the school heads who were subjects of this project. I tried to reveal the truth – what the schools heads said about leadership and what they practiced as school leaders. In this regard, the scripts of the biographical data were sent, and endorsed by all the participants. They cross-checked and made amendments or altered any information they saw unfit or irrelevant. In this way verification as advised by Mile and Huberman (1994) for qualitative research is already built within the data collection process.

3.13 Ethical Issues

In conducting this study the researcher had the advantage of being an experienced practitioner who was familiar with settings and the people. So it was easy to approach the informants and negotiate a time frame for this project. This study was conducted with schools principals whom the researcher has known and worked as colleagues for considerable time in the past. The researcher was also very familiar with the way the organization works. He knew all the contacts and the procedures that one has to go through to get the permission and to gain access to the various data intended for this study.

Once the researcher had the preliminary meeting with the supervisor, the researcher contacted all the participants by telephone and emailed in order to share and exchange ideas about the research project. In this process all the participants were made aware of the type of information the researcher wanted from them, why the information was sought, what purposes it would be put to, how they were expected to participate in the study and how it would directly and indirectly effect them (Kumah, 1999). The researcher also explained to the participants the nature, contents of the study and the anticipated benefits to the Maldives. All responded positively and gave their full support. A copy of the correspondence is attached in the Appendix E.

As a trusted colleague the participants appeared to have confided, and came forward with information. The participants were willing to talk to the researcher because they perceived him to understand their school situation. They did not hesitate to give information, because they knew what the researcher is going to do with the data gathered. Further, they appear to have trusted the researcher and considered themselves as part of the research project. So they were in no way compelled to give any depth of information. However, considering the capacity and the role of the researcher as an insider (internal researcher) all the necessary measures were taken to ensure that the standard ethical principles were followed. This entailed, for example, the decision to adopt a mixed method approach that appeared in the form of data

collection through the asynchronous interviews / synchronous interview and documentary analysis.

In addition to addressing the above challenges, the researcher took special measures to address other anticipated ethical issues particularly those related to informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (Cohen, Marion, and Morrison 2007). With respect to these issues, the researcher used face-to-face meetings and letters to ensure that participants had clear and accurate information about all aspects of the study and to assure them of anonymity. In this way, the participants were repeatedly reassured that the information would be treated confidentially and no person would be identified in the research report.

3.14 Summary

This Chapter presented the methodological framework for the study. It discussed the various approaches used in educational research and argued that this study adopted qualitative approach /biography as a strategy and used interviews as instruments to collect the data.

It presents an overall design of the study including procedures that were involved in data collection and analysis, addressing reliability, and validity issues negotiating access and enforcing required ethical standards. The presented methodological framework was instrumental for collecting and analyzing data that resulted in the findings which are reported in the Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

SECTION II

PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN THE MALDIVES: *RESOURCES, HISTORIES, RHETORICS, ACTIONS AND DILEMMAS*

CHAPTER FOUR

RESOURCES FOR HEADSHIP PRACTICE: LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATION THEORIES

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of literature on organisational theory and leadership theories to determine the kind of resources the school heads employed in their practices. By reviewing this literature, we are able to shed light on important aspects of school organisation and how schools have been conceptualised by educational sociologists as a way of understanding organisational functions that have relevance to management processes in schools. The theories of leadership provide a repertoire of leadership and managerial tasks that were useful to identify the imagined leadership and practices of the school heads.

This chapter starts with a theoretical orientation of the idea of school organisation in part 4.1, followed by a description of the change process in 4.2. In part 4.3, the dominant theories of leadership are described and critiqued. These include traits theory, style theory, transformational/transactional leadership, and distributive leadership. In part 4.4, a discussion is presented linking leadership and management. Finally in 4.5, a discussion is presented on specific global trends that have implications for leadership practices in schools. This includes insights into educational borrowing, diffusion and impositions of leadership practices across nations. A conclusion is presented in 4.6.

4.1 School Organisation

A journey to explore leadership phenomenon is not complete without any reference to literature on organisations. This is essentially because the concept of leadership has evolved in parallel with mainstream organisational theories. This development has been quite significant in terms of understanding both leadership and organisational functions. For instance, it is seen that how a leader sees and acts in his/her role depends on the philosophical basis of the organisation in place. In other words, management processes that are employed to direct educational organisations such as leadership, communication, motivation, and conflict management and change, reflect the assumptions underlying the very nature, structure and the functions of the organisation, and in this case, the school as an organisation.

For example, in centralised educational systems like the Maldives, the system can be described as a tightly controlled organisation with the dominant flow of communications occurring as metaphorically a top-down or one way-process. I say one way, as this signals the direction of power and the distribution of authority. Organisations theorists have produced enormous literature to define organisations and its functions. For instance, Hanson (2003) offers useful categories in defining educational organisations. These include schools as bureaucratic organisations, social systems (or socio-political systems) and open systems. The bureaucratic model is characterised as a hierarchical order of roles and responsibilities. It involves the formalisation, standardisation, and rationalisation of rules and roles around the mission of the organisation. On the other hand, the social system is characterised as a coalition of socio-political groups frequently working outside the formal system. It is assumed that people bring unique social and psychological characteristics to the job that influences the productivity of the role he or she occupies (ibid: 51).

According to this perspective, leadership is not seen as fixed in some superior psychological traits but in the ability to recognise changing situations and to be able to respond to new needs with the appropriate set of behaviours. An open system is

characterised by interlocking cycles of events within and between subsystems, wherein, communication follows a system-wide information network designed to integrate the activities of subsystems and to establish linkages with environment (ibid: 115).

Paisey (1981) suggests that different organisational structures reflect different value systems. These include democratic values and bureaucratic aspirations. Systems with democratic values offer opportunities for a greater level of participation on the part of the individuals; particularly in the process of decision making, which is the heart of organisational functions (Rosi and Nemerowicz, 1997). In bureaucratic systems the ability and right to identify issues which calls for decisions is the prerogative of the one or few in any organisation (ibid). Often, bureaucratic systems are referred to as closed systems with rigid structural elements causing a degree of inefficiency and ineffectiveness (Musazzi, 1982), while organisations with democratic values are referred as open- systems with flexible elements and wider participation (ibid).

As referred to earlier, the school system in the Maldives is a closed system with a bureaucratic structure. The school as an organisation is under the control of the Ministry of Education with decisions being made at the top level. As a consequence, jobs, authority, and positions are prescribed, delegated and regulated to obtain the predetermined goals of the bureaucrats. It does not present many elements that feature social system or the open system models. For example, communication is a one way process from the top to the bottom, and power is an exclusive right of the authority (see, Appendix B). Furthermore, the schools are not free to interact with its community for resources or any form of support without the approval of the higher authority. Community interests can only be mediated through the Ministry if and when they find it necessary.

Organisations are also described as having both formal and informal structures (Musazzi, 1982). The formal structure is referred to as the operational mechanism, which is in place to realise the organisational goals and objectives. On the other hand, the informal structure (e.g. in schools) is regarded as small groups of teachers,

administrative staffs or other stakeholders closely associated, having one voice for or against a person, policy or programme, and exerting sufficient influence on the school organisation. Advocates insist on utilising informal structures to promote better team work, and in achieving better cooperation and motivation, while warning against possible subversive effects if the elements are ignored (see Musazzi, 1982).

The informal elements that exist in formal organisation also have relevance to the phenomenon of schools as loosely-coupled systems as discussed earlier in Chapter 3 where I referred to the system under investigation as a tightly coupled one.

Based on my personal experience, it can be argued that the heads of schools in Male' implement an education agenda that is prescribed by the Ministry and have limited space to accommodate diverse micro-level interests. The interests of individual members of the organisation (school) or even other stakeholders are not well-heeded. Priorities are determined by the authorities and following them is obligatory to all staff under the bureaucratic impositions. The interest and grievances of staff and concerns of parents are largely stifled or delayed in the process. Thus, the effectiveness of the schools under such a system is questionable; particularly with the rapid socio -political changes that are taking place in the society today. Change is a natural phenomenon everywhere in the globe, and the pace of it is ever-increasing. Thus, the following section aims to shed light on the forces of change or change process in educational organisations which are supposedly linked to school leadership and its role.

4.2 Change Process

It is claimed in literature that the key to understanding management behaviour is to understand the nature of the changing situations the mangers face (see Hanson, 2003). The assumption is that leaders need to change the style of management as the situation changes. Such claims cannot be overstated considering the ever-increasing complexity of schools in our time.

Today, school leaders everywhere in the world are confronted with enormous challenges. They are faced with increasing pressure surrounded by a range of changes and reforms in the system. The world has been changing faster than ever before, and the rapid acceleration of changes in all aspects of human activity has created unpredictability and instability in the social environment (Whitaker, 1998). In schools, leaders are engaged in a mixture of expected and unexpected chains of events and situations (ibid). Consequently, school leaders are faced with major challenges as how best to learn from and cope with a world that is changing, and it requires them to respond to trends that are affecting wider society by having to acquire knowledge and new skills to thrive in a world of complexity and confusion. They are also expected to have the ability to adapt and modify systems, processes and structures as changed circumstances require. Work and organizational life is now far more complex than it ever was. This complexity is not only true of advanced and democratic systems, but also has relevance to small bureaucratic educational systems. Apparently, there is a sense of certainty over the functions and goals imposed on institutions in systems with bureaucratic structures. However, schools seem to get affected by changes taking place in wider society as which are brought to them by the students and the community, reflecting a disjuncture between top down certainty and the bottom up complexity. For instance, in the Maldives, with the introduction of universal education and the expansion of secondary education, there has been a huge growth of information and data - the rules and regulations and procedures, guidelines, policies and plans that have affected the nature of school organizations and its management structure.

These trends are based on the assumption that changing the behavior, structures, procedures, purposes or output of some unit within the school system is the way to ensure improved order, improved method and subsequently improved learning (see, Hanson 2003). In this respect, the school leaders are the key players in the process of change. In other words, they have a professional and technical role to play so as to influence his/her clients' behavior in a desired direction. However, the roles and responsibilities of agents of change vary from context to context depending on the

demands of the situation and the orientation of the individuals involved (ibid). For example, school leaders in the Maldives are expected to incorporate and implement changes imposed by authorities as well as initiate and implement innovations as part of their leadership practice. There is considerable pressure from the parents and interest groups of the community to launch innovations, and bring about improvement with regard to school outcomes and the teaching and learning process so as to meet the demands of the society. However, on the other hand, school leaders in more decentralized systems are likely to have a liberal and autonomous role in the process of change, or indeed, act as educational agents of change. The fact is that, at present, school leaders working in both centralized and decentralized systems have to be more aware of the process of change and its diverse interpretations and connotations associated with change if they are to be effective leaders, and equally for us to, in turn, understand leadership phenomenon.

The analysis undertaken here suggests the magnitude of this process of change and its complexity, and the implication for school leadership in the Maldives. It is also clear from the discussions that change is a journey filled with uncertainty and excitement. On this journey, the captains of the ships are required to sail through rough seas using unique navigational strategies appropriate to the prevailing wind and currents imposed on their positions. The next section presents the afore-mentioned strategies or dominant leadership theories in educational literature that have implications for the management of school organizations, and managing change for improved organizational order, improved methods and subsequently improved learning in schools.

4.3 Leadership of Educational Organisations

As referred to in section 4.1, leadership theories have evolved along with organisational theories. However, many leadership theories seem to have emerged due to the wider recognition of leadership role in improving organisational performance. Such recognition is being reinforced by research evidence, suggesting

that the quality of leadership has a very significant effect on the overall effectiveness of school organisation and on pupil learning. For example, Leithwood et al., (2006) demonstrates a strong correlation between students' achievements and talented leadership. Harris (2004) reinforces this view by saying that 'effective leaders exercise an indirect but powerful influence on the effectiveness of the school and on the achievement of the students' (2004:11). They believe that leadership serves as a catalyst for unleashing the potential capacities that already exist in the organisation. Studies in Australia and North America have also reported significantly positive effects of transformational school leadership on pupil engagement (see, Leithwood and Jantiz, 1999a, 1999b; Leithwood, Riedlinger, Bauer, and Jantzi, 2003; Silins and Mulford, 2002b; Silins, Mulford, and Zarins, 2002), and more recently, the effects of distributive leadership on teacher moral and organisational effectiveness (see, Harris et al, 2002, Gronn 2002; Macbeath et al., 2004).

Further, NCSL in England asserts the importance of school leaders in school effectiveness and school improvement as indicative in the following statement.

> The evidence on school effectiveness and school improvement during the last 15 years has consistently shown the pivotal role of school leaders in securing high quality provision and high standards...effective leadership is a key to both continuous improvement and major system transformation. (NCSL: 2001:5)

Consequently, scholars and researchers have come up with many theories and models of leadership that could lead to best practices, offering different advice about the roles of leaders. Analyses of the dominant theories are presented in the following sections.

Trait Theory

The 'Trait Theory approach' sees leadership as an attribute of personality and focuses on personal qualities and characteristics of effective leaders in order to find out what differentiates them from less effective leaders (see Stogdil, 1974). Inherent

in the trait approach is the belief that leaders are born rather than made. It is also based on the thinking of Aristotle who believed that individuals are born with unique characteristics which make them leaders.

The implication of this approach is that only people who have inherited such characteristics can become leaders. Therefore to become one, one should have the natural characteristics or qualities (e.g. intelligence, personality, appearance) which are unique to that person and distinguishes them from the rest of the people, and this theory fits to leaders working in overtly centralised bureaucratic systems.

Although research reveals several common traits such as a strong desire to lead and exercise power, honesty and integrity, and self-confidence amongst successful leaders (see, Locke et al., 1991), scholars and researchers find it hard to present a viable leadership model which completely ties in with the trait theory. Nevertheless, it is not uncommon to find people who support the views of trait theory even today; particularly in systems with bureaucratic structures where elites harbour notions of the 'superior leader', to curb their subjects and minimise political participation of ordinary people in governance and state affairs.

Leadership Style

In contrast to the Trait approach, this focuses on the behaviour of leaders - or their style (Southworth, 1998; Schmidt, 1973). This approach defines leaders' behaviours as having two dimensions. The first dimension looks at the behaviour of leaders with respect to the emphasis they put on building relationships and mutual trust between themselves and their followers. They play an expressive role in relation to the staff, demonstrating concern for them, listening to their professional worries, empathising with their colleagues and paying attention to their needs and successes (Southworth, 1998). These types of leaders are referred to as people-oriented leaders. The second dimension looks at the behaviours of leaders with respect to the emphasis they put on achieving results or getting the job done (ibid). Such leaders are referred to as 'task oriented' leaders

Style Theory suggests leaders are those who are equally concerned with both tasks and people. It implies that leaders in the school strive to ensure school goals and mandated requirements (e.g. national curriculum are achieved), while attending to the needs of teachers and other staff, and this theory fits to leaders working in organisations categorised as social systems. Understandably, this theory presents the issue of maintaining a balance between organisational goals and individual needs.

Contingency/ Situational

Unlike the traits and style approaches that focus on traits and behaviours of leaders respectively, the Contingency/Situational approach is concerned with contextual/situational factors through which leaders operates (Fiedler, 1967). Such factors include the position of power of the leader, task structure and leader member relations (ibid). This theory tries to match leaders to appropriate situations (Northouse, 2003), suggesting that a leader's effectiveness depends on how well the leader's style fits the context (Northouse, 2003), or where a leader is and with whom he/she works (Southworth, 1998).Thus, with regard to the contingency/situational approach, the effectiveness of the leader is very much linked to situations, implying variations of leadership effectiveness in contexts. For example, it suggests that the productivity of a leader who is working in a school with cooperative and competent staff will not be the same as a leader who works in a school where there is no such staff or resources.

The issue with this theory of leadership is with the many variables present in the context and its impact on leadership effectives. In other words, leader may not be necessarily in control of their situations and may present a confusing role regarding the tasks they have to attend to. Sometimes, the question is raised to find out whether leadership is a function of an individual, a group or an organisation. There seems to be no clear answer to the question.

Transactional Leadership

Transactional Leadership refers to leadership that involves a simple exchange of one thing for another (Burns, 1978). In the context of leadership, this means establishing negotiated arrangements that satisfy participants who then agree with a course of action (Hanson, 2003). Transactional leaders recognise what employees want from work and try to provide them with what they want if their performance warrants it, confer rewards and promises of reward for their effort, and respond to employees' immediate self-interests if they can be done by getting the work done (Hoy and Miskel, 1996) This model of leadership is also associated more with bureaucratic approaches where power and authority are centralised at the top of the organisation and the accomplishment of task is contingent upon the leader's ability to give reward or sanctions. According to West et al., (2000) transactional leadership approaches seem best suited to static school systems.

In the light of the insights which have so far been discussed in this study, the effectiveness of transactional leadership in school situations may be limited. For example, transactional leadership assumes that schools are static entities; but in reality, they are dynamic institutions often with ambiguous and diffused goals. Under these circumstances, school leaders need to be transforming the situation rather than adapting to the situation (see Leithwood et al., 2006). However, leadership that depends continuously on transactions through rewards has its limitations because it is practically impossible to meet the ever increasing demands of the followers. This is particularly true in the Maldives where head teachers are not in a position to execute such rewards because resources and major decisions are taken at Ministry level. However, scholars highlight certain situations where transactional leadership becomes necessary, particularly with regards to keeping the school running smoothly as an organisation and maintaining its stability (see Southworth, (1998). However, critics question the morality and educational value of transactional leadership, which reflects a business and market orientation in its approach (see Grace, 1995)

Transformational Leadership

The limitations of Transactional Leadership gave rise to various new leadership approaches that Burns (1978) refers to as 'transformational' leadership. Other approaches associated with Transformational Leadership include visionary, charismatic, cultural and inspirational leadership (Leithwood and Duke, 1995) According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership is made up of 4 elements: charisma (idealistic (influence); developing a vision; engendering pride; respect and trust; inspiration and motivation by creating high expectations; modelling appropriate behaviour and using symbols to focus efforts; intellectual stimulation - as continually challenging followers with new ideas and approaches; and individualised consideration, such as giving personal attention to followers, giving them respect and responsibility, and so on. Leithwood and Jantz (2005) view transformational leadership as consisting of three broad categories of leadership practice: (i) setting directions; (ii) developing people; and (iii) redesigning the organisation.

Underpinning the transformational approach is the ability of leaders to create new visions and communicate them to others in ways to get their commitment, whilst also inspiring followers to transcend their own interests for higher goals (Hoy and Miskel, 1996). In a similar vein, Leithwoood et al., (1999) view transformational leadership as a particular management approach, where power and authority are decentralised and accomplishment of task is contingent upon the leader's capacity to create, communicate and gain commitment to the vision, and building a strong organisational culture.

The effectiveness of transformational leadership is cited in the literature as offering positive organisational outcomes (see Leithwood et al., 1999). However, critics argue that transformational leadership builds upon the foundation of transactional leadership (e.g. maintaining stability and continuity), and needs to be treated as part and parcel of transactional leadership (Southworth, 1998). Others see the model as a

tool for controlling teachers or a mechanisation for encouraging and manipulation of followers (Alix 2000; Chirchello 1999). For critics, the model has many shortcomings, such as limitations in employing the model effectively in systems where key educational functions are centrally controlled (Southworth 1998), a lack of specific orientation towards student learning (Hopkins, 2003), a lack of a sound ethical base (Day et al., 2000)

These criticisms have resulted in several contemporary views of leadership which challenge the common notion that one individual has to be in charge for effective leadership to take place, and depicts leadership as a shared or distributed process (see, Lambert, 1998; Harris and Day, 2003, Spillane et al., 2001 and Gronn 2000). This model of leadership is often applied to leaders who are working in organisational structures that fit to the open system theory.

Distributive Leadership

More recently, the notion of Distributed Leadership has received much attention and generated research and empirical findings (Harris, 2005, Gronn, 2000). It is driven by a philosophy which is centred on democratic values, such as participation in decision making by the teachers (Leithwood et al., 2006, Spilnae 2006). It is also influenced by concepts from Sergiovanni's (1999) work, such as the notion of 'leaderful' organisations where it is posited that everyone should be/is capable of being a leader. Underpinning distributed leadership is the assumption that school organisations are so complex and the tasks so wide that no single person has the energy and skill to handle all the leadership functions (Hoy and Miskel, 2005), and therefore, leaders at the organisational apex are not unique sources of change and visions; nor do they act as necessary figures with a view to coaxing, persuading, inspiring or directing followers towards the sunny uplands of organisational success (Leithwood et al 2000). Thus, effective leaders depend upon the ability of those within a school to work together, constructing meaning and knowledge collectively (Lambert, 1998). Distributed leadership implies that a leadership is a collective responsibility and the leadership is about empowering their staff as they grow in

confidence within a learning community. The leadership aspects also extend beyond the schools and to the wider community. It entails shared decision-making and collaboration among parents, governors, teachers, and other stakeholders (see, Leithwood, 2006, Harris, 2005).

The distributive approach implies that for effective practice, school leaders must be ready and able to share and distribute the leadership role throughout the school organisation. Distributive leadership is a recently emergent model and practices have not become prevalent across schools, with critics sceptical about the effectiveness of the approach and its wider applications. In centrally-controlled systems like the Maldives, it may still take time to adopt this model as the role of head teachers is confined to a positivistic mode of instructions delivered from the top.

The discussions here on theories of leadership show that school leadership is a complex process and its theories differ quite distinctly in terms of philosophy and structure. For example, the traits theory suggests that leaders possess certain distinct qualities; style theories suggest that leaders are distinguished by the different importance they place on the management of tasks or relationships; situational theories argue that different situations actually require different kinds of leaders; and contingent theories suggest that the best way forward is through the matching of a particular leadership style to a particular situation (Hanson, 1990). Furthermore, transactional leadership theory presents leadership as a rational job, wherein leaders exercise power and influence through controlling the rewards in an organisation – rewards they can offer or withhold from the work force (Bottery, 2004). Transformational theories depict leaders as social architects, who in creating a vision, develop the trust of their followers, building loyalty, self confidence and self regard (ibid). Distributive theories suggest leadership as a shared responsibility and should be distributed among the whole staff (Spillane, 2006).

Thus it is clear from the above discussion that there is no single leadership theory that is exhaustive enough to provide a sufficient account of effective leadership in educational organisations, and this study is interested in understanding the

perceptions and practices of school heads in the light of these theories. It is also assumed that the concepts and practices of school leadership are influenced by the world wide practices of leadership. This link can be best described as a global trend in terms of educational governance and policy implementation. The next section aims to explore this link in order to offer an overview of the global phenomenon of the dispersion of organisational and leadership theories, and subsequent practices across nations with particular reference to the Maldives.

4.4 Linking Leadership with Management

As referred to and highlighted at the beginning of the chapter, an important issue around 'leadership' seems to concern the definition and multiplicity of interpretations for this term, including an on-going debate on the distinction between leadership and management. Leadership is a process that is similar to management in many ways as both involve influence (see, Northouse, 2003), working with people (ibid) and a concern with effective goal accomplishment (ibid).

On the other hand, some writers believe that there are some differences between leadership and management and that the two terms are mutually exclusive. For example, Bennis and Nanus (1985) stress that managers are people who 'do things right', and leaders are people who 'do the 'right thing.' According to Fullan (1991), leadership relates to mission, direction, inspiration, while management involves designing and carrying out plans, getting things done and working effectively with people. Similar views are shared by Davis (2006), who insists that leadership is about direction-setting and inspiring others to make the necessary journeys to achieve a new and improved state of a school, whereas management is concerned with efficiency, operating in the current state of circumstances and planning in the shorter term for the school. This view echoes Leithwood et al's (2000) contention that management is about maintaining stability (getting things done) while leadership implies bringing about improvement in the organization

In addition to all this, there are different but interrelating definitions of management. For example, Day et al., (1998) defines management 'as getting things done with and by other people'. In this respect, it is dealing with human and financial resources and directing them for the good of the organization, while according to Law and Glover (2000), it is similarly about people and relationships focused around clear organizational aims. This implies effective management as the ability to build up relationships, delegate tasks to other members of staff and involve them in decision-making.

It is evident from the discussions above that leadership is seen to be linked with aspects such as vision, direction-setting and inspiring others, while management is viewed in terms of the daily operations that are deemed necessary for the implementation of the vision. Furthermore, it becomes clear that the distinctions between leadership and management are quite arbitrary, as in actual organizational settings, the two functions are usually carried out by the same people.

In centralized systems like the Maldives, schools operate to meet the demands of the central authority, thus often being occupied with daily operational issues such as disciplinary problems of teachers, students, mobilizing funds, attending to paper work and conducting meetings. In contrast, they hardly have time to spend on more strategic issues that are necessary for improving teaching and learning like articulating shared visions and formulating strategic plans of their schools. In a highly centralized system, management and leadership are likely to be decoupled, this is, strategic directions set at the top, and heads manage the implementation
Nevertheless, school heads also face unanticipated activities that need to be handled carefully. This requires them to possess and use a variety of skills and knowledge related to both leadership and management.

4.5 Leadership Practices: Transporting, Borrowing – A Global Phenomenon

It is believed that towards the middle of 20th Century, nations all over the world adopted almost a homogenous curriculum of mass education as a means of building their nations and of advancing and modernising their countries (see, Meyer et al., (1992). According to Meyer at al. (1992), mass education systems were also built up as older and more limited instructional systems were challenged by pressures for the universalisation of education.

Although the ideals of mass education have their origin in the United States and Western European countries in the middle of 19th century, it became a sort of world standard ideology in the twentieth century (ibid:72). It was a model of education which was believed to offer a curricular that benefited all, and was aspired to by nations across the world, despite differences in physical geography, political and economic dimensions, and cultural distinctions (ibid). Furthermore, it was referred as an education for democracy, and civil-society building (Steiner, 2002). It was also a model of education with a curriculum that changed the content and instructions delivered in schools, and resulted in a number of implications regarding the way schools are run and managed in modern time. The phase of education changed from classical subjects to more modern scientific subjects like mathematics, natural science, social studies, followed by art, music and physical education (see, Meyer at al, 1992).

The Maldives essentially embraced the key elements of this worldwide ideology of mass education following its independence in 1965, along with its entry into the wider world system through global networks such as UNESCO, the World Bank and ADB (see, MoE, 1995). International agencies such as UNESCO, UNDP and World Bank have subsequently played a significant role in shaping the education system in the Maldives; particularly during the last two decades, (Baugmart, 1992), being actively involved in shaping the national primary curriculum and its mode of delivery (ibid). These international agencies have provided consultants, curriculum

developers, teacher educators and other resources to introduce and implement a worldwide mass education model prevalent across many countries (ibid).

These initiatives emerged and gained momentum at a crucial political transition period when a new president of the country was elected in 1979. The President pledged to the nation that he would extend primary education to the atolls, which was, until then, largely confined to a few schools in the capital Island (Male') and a couple of urban islands in the atolls (see, Luthufi, 2004). The new government capitalised on the prime moment when the country made its entry into the wider world system through global networks (as referred to above), showing unprecedented enthusiasm and cooperating with international agencies for the development and expansion of education in the country. Thus, it also turned out be the ideal and opportune time for international organisations and respective donors to impose or transfer a global or worldwide model of education to this island nation in the Indian Ocean (ibid). Consequently, the involvement of these organisations and donors resulted in the emergence of new concepts such as school-based management, decentralisation, community-based education and child-centred learning (see, UNDAF, 2002). The intensity of such initiatives of international agencies is evident in the following statements:

- The United Nations System will support the government in effecting a paradigm shift in the minds of decision makers, families and civil society alike with respect to their understanding and appreciation of quality education
- Increased support and advisory services will be provided to strengthen national capacity for effective educational policy formulation
- Mechanisms will be facilitated to establish quality standards for education
- Support will be provided for the development of life skills education for adolescents and youths in both formal and non-formal settings to ensure Maldivian adolescents and youths are equipped to face challenges of responsible adulthood
- The United Systems will increase support for the promotion of awareness of early childhood needs and learning methods
- The United Nations Systems will assist in developing a child-appropriate infrastructure, methodology and training for community-based pre-schools in the Maldives (UNDAF, 2002:4).

According to Steiner (2000), initiatives or reforms introduced by the international agencies and donors were seen as more to do with transfers and importing of practices from one country to another, rather than developing a curriculum and schooling to meet the local and community needs

The intrusion of international agencies into Maldivian education has been most dramatic and alarmingly fast. The following accounts provide information about the recent development of educational reforms, and how and when international agencies became dominant players in shaping these reforms and policies

Traditional education in the Maldives was restricted to reading and writing the scripts of the Quran and memorising the religious verses necessary for daily prayers and other related rituals and sacred practices (UNDAF, 2002). In some educational establishments/classes, numeracy and basic arithmetic were taught to the students (ibid).

In the 1940's and early 1950's, Mohamed Ameen, the first president of the Maldives, introduced numerous reforms that included opening schools in the outer-islands (Baugmart, 1992). These schools offered a broader curriculum and undertook studies to higher levels than was possible in the traditional 'makthabs' (Windham, 1992). The new curriculum included subjects like arithmetic, health sciences, social studies, physical education and drama (ibid). He also appointed principals and teachers to the schools, while also making arrangements to raise public funds by introducing local tax revenues (Chaudry, 1996). Mr. Ameen's initiatives can be ascribed to his education under a colonial system in India and Sri Lanka, and exposure to western higher education in France as a youth. This has relevance to the notions of exchange programs described by writers such as Steiner and Quist, (2000) in terms of educational transfers and borrowing.

In 1960, the country experienced new developments in the education sector as the government took the significant step of introducing English-medium schools in Male'. With this step also came a Westernised formal system of grade levels, text

books, expatriate teachers mostly from Sri Lanka, and a curriculum based on that of England. English Language was chosen to facilitate communication with the world at large and to provide educational opportunities abroad for secondary students (Baumgart, 1992). In short, the British model of education combined the worldwide mass curriculum with a school management style resembling the colonial establishments in Sri Lanka and India at that time.

In 1978, through its entry into the wider world system through global networks such as UNESCO and the World Bank, the country embraced a comprehensive global model and obtained consultancy and advice from agencies like the World Bank, UNESCO, and UNDP to shape its education system (see, UNDAF, 2002, MoE, 1995). The transferring and impositions of global curriculum by these agencies included the sharing and passing of materials of other systems, organising regional conferences and seminars, exchange programs and training educators and school teachers abroad.

This ongoing movement has obvious implications in the way the educational system and schools are being organised and managed in the Maldives today. The schools have structures that are similar to systems in other parts of the world and the mechanisms of operations are literally the same as in other systems. Perhaps the significant difference though exists in the areas of physical and human resources available when compared to the advanced and richer countries, a truly global phenomenon that is being experienced and thus common to almost every part of the world (see Meyer et al, 1992). The impact of globalisation on the education system is also evident in the discussion here, and that learning from others' experiences becomes inevitable, particularly in vulnerable states which need to raise their educational standards in order to be compatible with the global economy.

It is, thus, clear that educational leadership does not occur in isolation. Rather, is shaped and moulded by socio- political, cultural, and global forces. Therefore, in this research journey consideration is given to portraying a wider and more inclusive

view of the phenomenon by incorporating all the factors that link to its evolution and development.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the literature that has informed and helped in the conceptualisations of this study. It has reviewed some definitions of school organisation and organisational structures processes of change. It has also examined the dominant theories of educational leadership, namely: trait approach, style theory, contingent/situational theory, transactional leadership, transformational leadership and distributive leadership. Finally, the chapter has presented a discussion on educational borrowing, diffusion and impositions of leadership practices as a worldwide phenomenon, eliciting a wider perspective of leadership.

CHAPTER FIVE

LEADERSHIP IN ACTION 1: IMAGINED LEADERSHIP

5.0 Introduction

The importance of school leadership is less disputed than its definitions. This is linked to the complexity of leadership as a phenomenon, which is associated with individual beliefs, values and the socio- political context of which a particular leadership takes place. One of the objectives of this study is to pursue the definition of school leadership and to learn how the school heads interpret and define the concept, so as to offer a perspective of their imagined leadership, and thereby to learn the availability of leadership 'resources' for practices. Thus, this chapter provides insights into leadership perceptions and understandings of the practices on the part of the principals who took part in this study. The discussions are based on the interviews and the biographical data of the school heads and the findings are divided into three categories, namely: personal goals, beliefs and values (part 5.1), professional literature (part 5.2) and role prescriptions and expectations of the stakeholders (part 5.3). Literature is used as a strategy for the analysis and to guide the discussions, while specific data from the interviews is also quoted as a reference and incorporated into the subsequent sections. A conclusion is presented in part 5.4

5.1 Personal Goals, Beliefs and Values

I have argued that leadership not only lacks precise definition but there is also no common universal definition. What is perceived to be a firm definition varies from one context to another and one actor to another. Therefore, it was very important for me to explore the meaning of the term from the perspectives of the people who

informed me of their experiences. In other words, I am examining how the perceptions of leadership are viewed in the local setting of the Maldives; i.e. in terms of locations of practice. The issue is explored through RQ 1 and further probes during the interview sessions.

In this study, there is evidence to suggest that for the school heads, leadership partly comprises their personal aspirations, goals and values. According to Lortie , (1975) personal beliefs, values and ethics of school heads are a form of unarticulated views on the purposes of what have been internalised as a consequence of school leaders' 'apprentice of observation' while being classroom teachers (Southworth, 1995). Thus it is not surprising that beliefs and values as part of personal aspirations and goals are clearly a dominant feature in the analysis of the individual biographies. For example when I asked Rani about her leadership role she said, '*as a teacher, I always wanted the best for my students...so I work hard with the students to achieve excellence so that my students would get higher scores than others in other classes. I followed the same philosophy when I worked as a supervisor...and as a principal, I still work with the same mindset... now as a principal, I want to share my knowledge, skills and experience with the others* ' (RAI1). This quote illustrates Rani's personal goal in aiming to work towards the improvement of the school and her competitiveness while being at the top. In a different statement, she emphasised her concern or an aspiration for quality of education when she said, '*after completion of their education, students should have the skills and knowledge to compete in the global job market...and therefore, it is my aim to improve the quality of education*' (RAI1). By way of contrast, Kab provided an insightful personal value stance,when she talked about how she constructed her leadership, '*we have many problems and it is hard to solve the everyday issues by myself...but what keeps me going is my love for teaching and the profession I am engaged in*' (KA1).

Dhavoodh also revealed his goal in his story of leadership; he said that he started his career as a primary teacher and moved to the position of principal because he was ambitious and valued teaching. He said, '*engaging in teaching gives me personal satisfaction... I believe that being a principal, I could bring changes to classroom*

teaching and play a key role in developing an exciting learning environment for the children in the school. I am a great fan of progressive education, and my philosophy of education is based on child-centred learning and activity methods of teaching' (DAI1). The statement suggests a belief, or a philosophy, that Davoodh upholds in terms of progressive education, child-centred learning and his personal aspirations for the school.

Buddy also offered indications of personal goals in his story of leadership. He said, '*I am ambitious and became a principal to be in a position of influence to achieve personal goals. I want to contribute to the nation in the capacity as a principal or as an educational leader. I believe being in a pivotal position of influence, I have a moral obligation to extend sincere service to the community. I wanted to offer the highest possible education to the students under my care'* (BAI1). Principal Sithi also offered a similar deliberation that resonates with Buddy's. She said, '*as a teacher, I have enjoyed teaching and always have a great admiration and value for teaching...since childhood, I wanted to be a teacher...it was a dream. I am ambitious and hardworking... so I have managed my way up the ladder with the hope of achieving my desired goals as a teacher and now as the school leader...also, I consider myself both inside and outside the classroom. I see my teaching experience as a great advantage to running the school. I accepted the principal position because I believed that in becoming a principal, I could make a difference to the students. As a principal, I could create more opportunities for myself to help the students and thereby contribute to the nation.'* (SAI1). The above statements clearly reflect how Sithi constructed her leadership. She wanted to be in a position of influence (similar notions shared by Buddy) to affect the lives of the young people as a national duty. She firmly believed that as a principal, she could influence what goes on in classes to develop the skills and the minds of the young ones, which would have a great impact on their adult life and as citizens of their country.

The above discussion clearly highlights the significance of the principals' personal goals, aspiration and values in constructing their identity, and subsequently, their

leadership; notions which appear in Giddens' (1991) social theory of identity construction.

To sum up, we have to take into account that the personal aspirations, goals and values of school leaders are a significant factor in the ways they understand and interpret leadership, which is assumed to have implications in terms of their actions or styles of leadership.

5.2 Professional Literature – Motivation, Vision, Role Modelling

Interestingly, some definitions and concepts of leadership that were described by the school heads resonate with contemporary literature on school leadership. These include concepts such as motivation, vision and role modelling. For example, Rani said, '*I believe a good leader should provide staff with guidance, encouragement and instruction so that they can be motivated to do their work. I believe as a principal, and to be an effective one, a principal should motivate the staff and students by way of this principle. If not, staff morale will be low, and subsequently, the productivity of their work will be affected*' (RI1). According to Rani, many problems can be avoided if the staff and students are highly motivated. For her, motivation is a key determinant in achieving the school goals. She acknowledged the importance of psychology and establishing a better understanding of her pupils and staff so that they could be inspired to do well in studies and teaching respectively. She also believed motivation was important because she did not regard staff as working only for money. She thought leadership was mostly about being a prime motivator for the staff and the students. Similarly, principal Kab also noted the significance of her role in motivating the staff when she said, '*a school head can show charisma and motivate the staff, guide and lead. It is something we always do in the school* (KI1). The theme of motivation appeared and was repeated in the biographies of all the other principals too, as an important dimension of effective leadership (see, Appendix B on biographical data).

The concept of motivation occurs in many leadership models documented in literature; particularly in transformational leadership. According to Bass (1998), transformational leadership is inspirational, and is about being able to engage the emotions of individuals in the organisation. It also refers to the leaders' influence over their colleagues and the nature of leadership followers. Motivation is enhanced by creating high expectations, modelling, appropriate behaviour, and using symbols to focus on efforts, intellectual stimulation, continually challenging followers with new ideas and approaches, and individualised consideration, giving personal attention to followers by giving them respect and responsibility (ibid). Motivation is a significant aspect of transformational leadership, and also one of the eight dimensions conceptualised by Leithwood (1994).

A second theme that is dominant in the mindsets of the school heads was the concept of vision. The following quotes illustrate how the participants related vision and the role of leadership. Rani asserts that, *'Leadership is all about getting people together and guiding them towards a particular direction' ...in other words leaders should have a vision of his/her own to go forward with institutional goals' (RI1).* Meanwhile, Sithi observed that, *'Leaders lead others and try to achieve pre-determined goals....Leadership activities include planning, setting goals and providing guidance....leaders lead others and try to achieve pre-determined goals with a personal vision' (SI1).*

The sense of providing direction is certainly deemed as important, as Davoodh notes: *'Leadership is determining a direction for the school and developing a collective vision'* (DI1L). Kab regards the help of team thus: *Leadership is about having a vision ...and the capacity to plan and materialize that vision with the help of other team members' (KI1).* Buddy also acknowledges vision amongst many other leadership aspects: *'Leadership is about having a vision and ability to plan, delegate and evaluate ...leader must have some personal charisma, be committed, and be able to lead, have knowledge and be creative too. Leadership is how one exposes himself/herself to public to offer service' (BI1).*

Dhonbe, however, provided a similar emphasis: *'Leadership is about being a role model, being able to listen to others, and most importantly, to have a vision for the school and conveying that vision to the staff and bringing them on board to work towards the vision' (DnI1)*

Dhonbe, Buddy, Kab and Dhoodhm all associate leadership with vision, a concept which is dominant in transformational leadership (see Stoll and Fink, 1996). Meanwhile, Rani and Sitti consider leadership as getting people together and guiding them towards a particular direction along the lines of the concept of vision. The findings suggest that they support the general belief and the idea that formulating the school's purposes as an important leadership function, which includes articulating vision and setting goals for their schools. The responses indicate a form of leadership that focuses on getting others involved; particularly with an emphasis on building relationships among the staff as a mean to obtaining commitment towards school improvement. These notions also resonate with what is defined as transformational leadership; an approach that emphasises inclusiveness and greater teacher participation (see, Bass, 1999). For instance, Stoll and Fink, (1996) recognise the importance of transformational leadership as an approach for school leaders to communicate in a way that enables individuals and groups to build and act upon a shared vision of enhanced learning for students. Furthermore, Gronn, (1999) shares the above views. He asserts that leadership in schools cannot be assumed without the followers' cooperation, and such cooperation is only possible when the followers perceive their values are being fulfilled in the outlook and actions of those occupying positions of leadership responsibility.

The importance of a leadership vision is echoed in contemporary educational leadership and management literature which suggests that effective leaders have a clear vision for their organisations to which they are fully committed, both personally and professionally (see Bush, 2008; Bush et al. 2002; Southworth, 1997; Nias et al., 1992; Woodhead, 1992). According to Day (2000), outstanding leaders set a vision for the future, drawing on their understanding of the organisation(s) in which they work, and their political awareness of the context.

Despite this recognition of personal vision on the part of effective leadership, all the heads noted a difficulty in realising such a vision for their schools whilst following strict orders from the Ministry to run the school, while they were unable to express or offer a vision of theirs, or were unable to tell if their visions were different from the authorities. However, they all expressed aspects of their passion for what they were doing in schools such as love for teaching, helping their staff and students to develop and becoming useful citizens (see biographical data).

There were also other notions of leadership which emerged from the interviews, and have relevance to school management and leadership literature (see, Caldwell and Spinks, 1992). These include concepts such as *capacity to plan and work as a team* (KI2), *having personal charisma, be committed, be able the to lead, have knowledge and be creative* (BI2), *being a role model and building relationships and being able to listen to others* (BI2).

Such notions and framing of leadership has roots in the discourse of human resource management. The following quotes from the biographies demonstrate this connection. For instance, Rani connected leadership to activities such as staff consultation, organising, monitoring supervision and providing feedback: *'In order to achieve the goals, I apply strategies such as sharing ideas with the staff and incorporating theirs into the day- to –day operations of the school. In this way, I am able to get the commitment of the staff to the goals and objectives set together. I set time frames to complete tasks such as hundred percent for the classes at the end of each year. Furthermore, I ensure work is being monitored at appropriate intervals and provide feedback to individual teachers. This includes praise for good work and giving incentives like recognising excellence in work. Furthermore, I also ensure achievements are celebrated with no delays. As part of my management tactics, I give roles to different people according to their capabilities. I manage this by continuous observation of their work and keeping records of their progress' (RAI1).*

Kab points out building relationship relationships with the stakeholders with a particular emphasis on teachers: *'The most effective strategy for me is to support the teachers and build relationships with teachers' grievances and offer advice to their problems. I provide moral support, and it is quite an effective strategy to keep teachers on track' (KAI1)*

Meanwhile, Buddy noted, *'My strategy of leading the school is being considerate, having good judgement, being charismatic, displaying fairness and an ability to provide guidance and support to the staff and students' (BI1).* Buddy's statement suggests his stance for role modelling.

On the other hand, Davoodh raises the importance of teamwork, planning, organising and creating a friendly environment. He asserted that: *'Three major aspects are important to successful leadership. These include teamwork, staff involvement in planning and organising school programs and activities, and creating a friendly environment in the school for the students, the staff and parents' (DvI1)*

Like Kab, Saithi also focuses on building relationships: *'To be effective in my job, it involves getting the acceptance of teachers, students and parents. So, I try to build close bonds with parents, students and staff.....Successful principals are those who put learning at the centre and set high expectations for students and teachers. To be effective, they must also have human resource management skills and communications skills'* (SAI1).

Sithi also recognises the importance of human resource management, and talks about delegation, monitoring and collective decision-making: *'Leaders lead others and try to achieve pre-determined goals and work with people and get the job done...and in the process, delegate, monitor the day to day work of the staff. I believe in teamwork and give importance to collective decision- making in the day- to- today operations of the school, and I involve others and give value to shared ideas'* (SI2).

Dhonbe recognises the importance of consultation with stakeholders: *'I trust my staff and value trustworthiness, I consult my teachers and other member of staff on school matters, I seek advice from parents and students on school issues... ..I do not take decisions on my own....all (school level) decisions are collective ones' (DnI1)*

These excerpts clearly demonstrate the features and qualities that are frequently quoted in the human resource management and managerial leadership (see, Bush, 2008 and Caldwell and Spinks, 1992). Some of these notions also appear in various models of leadership literature. For example, the notion of *role modelling* appears in cultural leadership. In this approach, leaders are seen to be exemplars of values and beliefs. Leaders are watched by their followers, being closely observed by them to see if their behaviours exemplify their values and check whether their espoused values are consistent with their day to day actions (Southworth, 1998). Such notions repeatedly echoed in the biographies of the school heads.

For instance, Sithi, Davoodh and Buddy all refer to aspects of modelling as we see with their respective comments:

- *'It is part of my job to conduct daily assemblies and address the students and the teachers' (SI2).*
- *'We have regular social events for teachers and parents, and I believe it is important to bring both teachers and parents together (DI2).*
- *'I often have formal and informal discussions with my staff...I often visit classes and talk to student to solicit their views...I have a forum for parents' (BI2)*

Role modelling is a strategy advocated by the champions of instructional leadership (see Southworth, 2002; Bush and Glover 2003).

Concepts of *planning and organisational direction and achieving organisational goals* emerge in instrumental leadership, this model of leadership being concerned with work or tasks. It is leadership which focuses on getting the job done (Southworth, 1998). This theory implies that the leaders in the school strive to ensure

that school goals and mandated requirements (e.g. national curriculum) are achieved. The principals noted the importance of the instrumental aspect of their leadership, indicating their focus on achieving school goals as quoted below.

Both Kab and Sith were specific about achieving school goals: Kab notes: *'I am a good manager, and I can organise the work in the school and achieve the school goals, this is another reason why I accepted the job' (KI1),* and that*'...as a leader I work as a team member to achieve the goals ...' (KI1).* Sith states: *'...I am conscious of my responsibilities and plan ahead to achieve institutional goals' (SI1)*

Concepts of planning and providing organisational direction appear in all most all models of leadership, particularly the managerial leadership (see Caldwell, 1992).

A theme that also appeared to be dominant among all the participants was to have the *knowledge and the capacity to guide others.* These concepts resonate with educational or instructional leadership, as referred to in Sergiovanni's (1995) leadership forces. It involves the use of expert knowledge about education and schooling. It is strongly concerned with teaching and learning, including the professional learning of teachers as well as student growth (see Southworth, 2002). Examples include the capacity to diagnose student needs, develop curriculum, provide supervision and conduct evaluations. It is argued that such a leadership for the school as a whole is required for the head teacher (see, Blase and Blase's (1998).

Kab, Rani and Sithi are very firm about their espoused value of professional knowledge:

'I believe that I need more knowledge and professional training to be a more effective principal...so I can help the teachers in their difficulties' (KI1)

'The most important quality for an effective leader is to have professional knowledge...and principals should always make a point of updating their learning on matters such as curriculum and pedagogical issues' (RI1)

'... talking about tensions and dilemmas, let me tell you this ... as a principal, nothing can be worse than to face a teacher who comes up for professional help while you are incapable to do so' (SI1)

The findings also indicate a trend towards building relations with staff and parents and involving them in the decision making process and in the affairs of the schooling in general.

Rani, Davoodh, Kad , Buddy and Sithi equally recognise this. They state:

'I believe in a school, people should work as a cooperative unit... the principal, teachers and non-teaching staff should all function as a team'... therefore I share ideas with the staff and incorporate theirs, ...I also give leadership roles to different people according to their capabilities too. In this way, I ensure that each gets the feeling of importance and motivation to perform their everyday tasks...so staff take pride in their work , and exert their best effort' (RI2).

'I trust my staff and value trustworthiness... I consult my teachers and other staff on school matters... I seek advice from parents and students on school issues. I do not take decisions on my own....all decisions are collective ones, except the ones advised by the Ministry (DI2).

'My philosophy of management is based on values such as unity and collaboration... I believe school effectiveness can be enhanced through strong teamwork... it can only be achieved by identifying collective goals and guiding towards them, while keeping the staff motivated' .... So I apply various strategies, this includes sharing ideas with the others and involving them in the decision- making process. I also assign specific responsibilities and allow flexibility to plan and organise the activities and programs (BI2).

'A school head should show charisma, and inspire and motivate, guide and lead. It is something that we always do in the school' (KI1).

'I believe staff commitment is a significant factor to achieve organisational goals, and to get their commitment, it is important to empower them and provide space for their initiatives ...this way, they become responsible and accountable' (SI2).

A number of points are worth noting here. For example, leadership is not exclusively located in the head teacher as it also lies in the wider school staff. This notion resonates with descriptions of distributive leadership by Bell, Bolam and Cubillo (2003), and by Goffee and Jones (2006), who see it as a non-hierarchical dimension of leadership. They report that leadership qualities are not the sole preserve of those at the top of an organisation but an inclusive form of leadership that involves teachers and other management staff. Moreover, in this model, parents and students are also important sources of leadership (Leithwood and Riehl (2003). However, none of the principals reported a significant leadership role on the part of the parents and the students. What seems to be evident is the changing nature of leadership behaviour towards the other stakeholders that promotes better relationship with parents and the teachers rather than extending an obvious leadership role beyond the headship. This can also be linked to the prescriptive nature of their leadership (see Chapter 2 of this thesis) which ties their hands behind their backs in several respects, and leaves little room for either negotiations or professional judgment.

In these discussions, there is also evidence to suggest individual values and beliefs in the form of personal aspirations and goals, and professional literature appears to play an enormous part in the school heads' professional life, offering an image or a construction of who they are and what they are doing. These beliefs and motivations can supposedly be traced back to both their exposure to professional literature and the lay theories of the school heads, and their formulation through apprenticeship of observation as described by Holt- Reynolds as:

> Beliefs develop naturally overtime without influence of instruction. Pre-service teachers do not consciously learn them at an announced, recognised moment from a formal teaching/learning episode. Rather, lay theories represent tacit knowledge lying dormant and unexamined... Developed over long years of participation in and observation of classrooms...and teaching/learning incidents occurring in schools, homes or the larger community...lay theories are based on untutored interpretations of personal lived experiences (1992, p. 236).

There are also specific incidents which highlight the influence of professional literature in framing the leadership of those incumbents in the role. The following excerpts from the biographies of Rani, Kab and Buddy describe the connection:

> *'As part of developing my professional work, I have used every opportunity that came by and participated in a number of national and international seminars and conferences in education' (RI1)*

> *'As part of my professional development, I do a lot of reading, attend educational seminars and conferences, and interact with professionals as often as I can' (KI1)*

> *' I think my principles of management are influenced by reading Western literature on school leadership and school effectiveness along with other academic exposure by means of attendance and participation in international and national seminars, and workshops in school management and leadership' (BI1)*

These statements also seem to resonate with the theoretical notions expressed in Wenger's (1998) community of practice. In his view, 'the very definition of individuality is something that is part of the practices of specific communities', (ibid: 146). According to Wenger, '[We] cannot become humans by ourselves, it is through the interaction of the individuals and the community that identity is continuously buffeted and reshaped' (1998, p.41), and claims 'learning as the conduit between individuals and the community', (ibid: 125). This suggests a perspective that can be linked to the school heads' understanding of leadership and the practices of the wider community, the globalised school leadership and management practices.

5.3 Role Prescriptions and Expectations of Stakeholders

There is strong evidence to suggest that how these school principals frame their leadership is very much influenced by the prescriptive nature of their role in the schools, and the demands and expectations of the other stakeholders. The following quotes are illustrative with regard to *bureaucratic obligations,* or duties and

responsibilities officially assigned by the Ministry of Education as their job description.

Rani, Kab, Buddy Dhonbe and Davoodh each describe their role in the following ways:

'My instructional leadership responsibilities include daily monitoring of teachers' work to ensure that they follow the Ministry's prescribed objectives for each of the subjects, and that they adhered to proper time allocations as provided by the prescribed'(RI1)

'We follow orders and instructions from the Ministry of Education. They grant the resources and expect the school heads to use them according to their prescriptions, thus, while working in such conditions, one cannot have a personal vision' (KI1, KI2).

'As school leaders, we do not have much professional autonomy, the curriculum is centrally controlled with assessment and evaluation directed by the Ministry' (BI1)

'Talking about autonomy...we don't even have autonomy to conduct exams, make a change to curriculum, hire or fire a teacher, no say in budget allocations, assessment and evaluation...and codes of conduct are predetermined by the authorities; the salaries of the staff are determined by the Ministry and approved by the President's Office, all the major decisions are taken at the top level' (DnI1)

'The school principals do not have the autonomy to exercise any form of leadership practices beyond the job description and the policy guidelines. The principals of Male' schools perform a managerial role. We implement the Ministry's policies and follow their instructions to administer the schools. The Ministry determines curriculum objectives, assessment and evaluation procedures, recruits teachers and other staff; allocates budget and control finance; determines rules and regulations for staffs and students; intervenes with the school initiatives and maintains central control over the school all the time' (DI1)

Taken together, their statements highlight the bureaucratic obligations imposed on the school heads in Male' as part of their duties and responsibilities. The job descriptions and school logs also confirm these statements (see, Appendix D). According to these, the school heads spend a good amount of time attending to

administrative and managerial duties as per required by the official job description (outlined in Table 2.1). This also suggests that these school heads' understandings and framings of leadership reflect what is being officially prescribed to them. This is certainly related to the centralised nature of the system which is a part of the context that those in the role of head are embedded in.

Recent research and literature highlights the importance of context and culture as a means of understanding leadership. According to Walker and Dimmock (2002), culture and context influence the leaders' 'beliefs and actions', while culture and context is defined in terms of local history, personal biography, official policy, and the internal and external environment (see also Sugure, 2005). Such notions resonate with the findings and the discussions in this study. There is strong evidence to suggest a great part of their leadership is prescribed by the policy makers in the form of job descriptions, instructions and guidelines from the authorities.

In addition to this, there is evidence of increasing pressure from parents and teachers over what the school heads do in schools. The teachers and parents expect the school head to play an instructional leadership role, where the principal engages in academic and pedagogical aspects of the school such as curriculum development and staff development. The following quotes highlight those elements. For instance, Rani notes: *'It is not an easy job to be a principal now... we have to satisfy the parents, teachers who expect the principal to focus on academic programs of the school, and to devote time on aspects for improving teaching and learning...but it is not easy to meet their expectation while following strict rules and regulations from the Ministry', (RI1).*

Like Rani, Kab also states: *'Today, parents want to be involved in school affairs and make more demands like more home work, extra activities and changes in school curriculum ... and more importantly, I should say that the needs of the students and parents' expectations have changed dramatically, and being a principal is a stressful job now. As a principal, I feel the need for a change in areas of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and evaluation; these are issues coming from both teachers*

and parents. . I have raised my concern with the authorities to initiate some form of change, unfortunately, the voices has been so far stifled, and also, it means my leadership desires are kept under control until the time is ripe for such endeavours' (KI2).

Kab, Buddy and Sithi express concern over meeting the expectations of the parents:

- *'There is so much demand on public sector, including school parents who demand quality education for their children' (KI1)*
- *'We are catering to the needs of the clients, and that means we have to keep the parents, the students and the staff happy' (BI1)*
- *'It is often hard to practice what one believes due to external influences...these influences include obligations to the authorities, parents' pressure, and the demands of the students and expectations of the teachers... a great deal of my time is about meeting the expectations and demands of the stakeholders rather than putting my beliefs into practice. So, I have very little time to reflect on my work or consider personal philosophy' (SI1)*

Therefore, with regard to the ongoing discussions of this study, it can be asserted that the there is an increasing demand and higher expectations on the part of school heads' job from the stakeholders along with stressful bureaucratic obligations. These are issues that echoed in the stories of the school heads and imply unprecedented consequences or dilemmas in terms of their effectiveness as school leaders. These issues will be addressed in subsequent chapters.

5.4 Conclusion

In this analysis it is clear that the identity of individual heads and the leadership behind those identities are driven by personal aspirations, goals and values, professional learning, role prescriptions and demands and expectations of the teachers and parents. However, the extent of these 'resources' for practice seem to vary in terms of degree and priority, suggesting bureaucratic obligations being more

prominent than the other factors. In the next chapter, we investigate the school heads' actions in attempt to follow through this assumption by pursuing their day to day activities in schools.

CHAPTER SIX

LEADERSHIP IN ACTION II: PRACTICING LEADERSHIP

6.0 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on principals' day- to- day leading and management of activities in their schools, or in other words what they might best describe as their 'practices'. Effort is made to locate their actions in context in order to explore the relevance of their imagined leadership, on the one hand, and to learn how they use the 'resources' for practice in real actions on the other. It is reported in Chapter Five that the participants' understanding or imagined leadership is part and parcel of their personal aspirations, goals, values, professional learning, role description and expectations on the part of the stakeholders.

The objective of this chapter is to offer an account of the school heads' statements of their actions, to investigate their personal narratives on leadership and deployment of professional theories in their work life. The actions of the school principals are analysed in terms of leadership responsibilities that involve their administrative duties, instructional tasks, daily routines, and social and public engagements. Theoretical concepts from literature are also used to guide the investigation and for the analysis of the findings.

The chapter is developed in the following way. It begins in 6.1 as leadership actions, which demonstrate official duties, personal goals and aspirations, demands of the teachers and expectations of the parents. The discussions are drawn from the biographical and the interviewed data of the participants, Rani, Kab, Buddy, Sithi, Dhonbe and Davoodh. A conclusion is presented at the end in 6.2.

6.1 Leadership Actions

The role of the school heads in the Maldives is to implement the mandate of the educational authority, the Ministry of Education (see, chapter 2). They largely practice a leadership that results in what has been described as 'Christmas tree schools' (Bryk et al, (1998). In other words, the school heads deliver the policy of the Ministry and implement all the mandates as required and expected as part of their job. In this way, they avoid confrontations with the authorities and guard themselves against any possible disciplinary actions. It is also a common feature of educational systems in many small states, where all the managerial and administrative functions are controlled by the top level of the hierarchy (see Lauglo, 1997).

Participants were questioned about their leadership actions. They all reported aspects that had relevance to their mandates, the demands of the teachers, and expectations of the parents that have a great impact on their working life. The following statements by the heads reflect the nature of their tasks in school.

Sithi describes her role: *'My instructional leadership responsibilities include monitoring teachers' work to ensure they follow Ministry's prescribed objectives for each of the subjects, and ensure that they adhere to proper time allocations as required and provided by the prescribed schedule...I also appraise and evaluate all the teachers two times a year, using a Ministry's assessment instrument' (SI1).*

Like Sithi, Kab says that,*'We follow orders and instructions from the Ministry officials....they grant the resources and they expect the school heads to use them according to their instructions and guidelines, (KI1).*

In the same tone Dhonbe and Davoodh each mention respectively that,

'My responsibilities include maintaining good relationships with parents, teacher's students and the officials of the Ministry of education'. These are aspects included in my job description' (DnI1)

'We implement the Ministry's policies and follow their instructions to administer the schools (DI1).

It is clear from the above quotes that the school heads' job is essentially implementing the Ministry's policy and following specific instructions to manage the schools. Their task is about conveying the policies to the staff and the parents, while ensuring every effort that these are put into practice.

When the school heads were questioned about their official duties and responsibilities, they reported the following activities.

- Implementing the school policy (RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1)
- Planning and organising school programs and activities (RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1)
- Motivating staff and providing guidance and support (RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1)
- Monitoring teachers' work and providing feedback to them (RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1)
- Meeting the educational targets (R11/ BI1)
- Conducting and facilitating professional development programs for the staff (RI1/ DI1)
- Building relationship with parents, and other stakeholders (RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1)
- Utilisation of resources (RI1/ KI12)
- Communicating with staff, parents and students (DI1)
- Promoting team work, delegating, decision-making (RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1)
- Creating a friendly environment (RI1/, SI1/DI1)
- Building capacity in the school (RI1/, SI1/DI1)
- Monitoring, supervision and evaluation of teaching (RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1)
- Attending to day to day routines of the school, attending to paperwork, finance, office administration, maintenance (RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1)

The above list suggests that, on the one hand, the school heads are mostly engaged in the management aspects of the school, such as organising programs and activities which appear within the policy guidelines of the Ministry. On the other hand, the

data does not indicate the school heads' involvement in leadership tasks defined in the contemporary literature such as setting directions for the organisation, and creating visions and delivering it, qualities which have already been stated in this study as being important leadership attributes that provide a moral purpose and the future directions of the school (see, Davies and Davies, 2006; Caldwell, 1992; Bush, 2008; Leithwood, 1994; Gold et al., (2003; Southworth, 2002: Blase and Blase, 1998).

These latter themes appearing are major topics of concern in the educational leadership and management literature: monitoring and evaluation (see, Fleishman et al.,1991; Barge, 1996)), supervision (Starret, 2005), decision making (Fullan, 2003), staff development (Fullan, 2003), dealings with finance and budget (Cadwell and Spinks,1993), goal setting (Yukl, 1989), delegating (Fullan 2003, leading Bush, and Gover, 2003), providing moral support (Hallinger and Heck, 2003; Starrat,(2005), mediating between parents (Hill, 2006), capacity building in the school (Hallinger, at al.(2003), promoting school image (Blunt, 2003) and utilisation of resources (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003). Tasks, such as goal setting and providing directions, motivating and inspiring member of staff, articulating and communicating vision, feature as leadership attributes, while tasks like monitoring, supervision and attending to administrative duties are often described as managerial functions. Various models are documented in the literature to specify and describe these tasks.

Sergiovanni's (1991) typology of leadership forces offers a useful description. For instance, he describes monitoring, evaluating, and implementing school plans, developing strategies for effective use of time, attending to financial aspects and, communicating with the stakeholders as *technical leadership*; involving staff and the parents in the affairs of schooling, eliciting cooperation of the staff, students and parents, fostering cohesion and unity amongst staff members and the school community as *human leadership*; supervising closely the teaching and learning process, and managing curriculum and its development as *educational leadership*; and articulating and communicating a shared vision as symbolic leadership and, being exemplary in carrying out school activities in school, recognising and

rewarding hardworking staff and students, being a role model and recognising and rewarding others as *cultural leadership.*

Given the nature of the system and the prescriptive nature of the school head's work, it raises questions as to whether what they say is their practice actually amounts to what can be termed as leadership actions. At best, the list seems to reflect a professional knowledge and exposure to leadership and management literature, and possibly their espoused values and disposition to the management and administration of their schools is based on such an exposure.

Subsequently, the reported activities of their work were verified against documents collected from the school. These included individual principals' daily routines, weekly schedules and personal diaries. . The table 6.1 presents a summary of their daily activities and estimated time spent on each activity (data source: personal diary, school log)

Data from Table 6.2 reveals that Principal Rani spends 6 hours in meetings per day. This includes appointments, Ministry meetings, parent and teacher meetings. Some meetings are reported as social events with either teachers or parents. She spends 1 hour on observing teaching and 3 hours on supervision, which includes school rounds and overseeing extracurricular activities held after school hours.

Rani also spends 3 hours on administrative work. Principal Kab gives 6 hours of her day to meetings and 4 hours for the school round and supervision. Although she did not report any observation of teaching, she spends 1 hour visiting classes and 2 hours on administrative work. Principal Buddy is in meetings for 3 hours and dedicates 3 hours to administrative work. He spends 6 hours on school rounds and supervision, and 1 hour on research; primarily reading educational management and leadership books or internet surfing .

Time	Rani	Kab	Buddy	Sithi	Dhonbe	Davoodh
7-8	Assembly, Meeting with APs, 1	Meetings 1	Administrative Work 4	Meeting with APs 1	Assembly and meeting with APs 1	Assembly and briefing with APs 1
8-9	Attending to outside letters 4	Administrative work 4	Supervision (go on rounds) 3	Checking daily schedules -4	Go on the school rounds 3	Attending to the letters 4
9-10	Appointments with parents and others 1	Attending meetings/ 1	Meet with supervisors / APS 1 -	School rounds 3	Attending meetings / 1	School rounds 3
10-11	Class observation 2	Appointments 1	Go on the rounds 3	Checking records/ administrative work 4	Administrative work 4	Class observation 2
11-12	Administrative work 4	School rounds 3	Administrative work –4	Classroom Observation 2	Appointments 1	Discussion meetings with supervisors 1
12-13	Administrative work 4	Attending to session issues/meeting – 1	Administrative work 4	Reading 5	School rounds 3	Reading 5
13-14	Meeting with APs and supervisors 1	school rounds 3	Meet supervisors and attending to their issues 1	Meeting with APS 1	Administrative work 4	Assembly/ appointments – 1
14-15	Lunch Break	Administrative work 4	Searching internet for knowledge 5	Lunch break	Lunch Break	Briefing the afternoon staff 1
15-16	Supervision 3	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Supervision 3	Meetings with APs-1	School rounds 3
16-17	Meetings / Functions 1	Visiting classes 2	Doing the rounds 3	Administrative work. 4	School rounds 3	Classroom observation 2
17- 18	Aministrative work. 4	Supervision 3	Attending to extracurricular activities 3	Meeting with teachers and supervisors 1	Research online 5	Lunch Break
18-19	Supervising extracurricular activities 3	Attending meetings (aft. Session) 1	Attending extracurricular activities 3	Attending extracurricular activities 3	Attending to extracurricular activities 3	Extracurricular activities in school 3
19-20	Supervising extracurricular activities 3	Overseeing extracurricular activities 3	Attending to extracurricular activities 3	Extracurricular activities 3	Extracurricular activities 3	Extracurricular activities 3
20-22	Meetings/ functions 1	Meetings/ functions 1	Meetings / functions 1	Meetings / functions 1	Meetings / functions 1	Meetings / functions 1

Table 6.1 Daily Schedules of the School Heads

Principal Sithi spends 4 hours in meetings, has 3 hours for administrative work, 3 hours for supervision and school rounds, and 1 hour reading and 1 hour for classroom observation Principal Dhonbe spends 5 hours in meetings, 2 hours on administrative work, 5 hours doing school rounds and supervision, and 1 hour reading. Principal Davoodh spends 5 hours in meetings, 1 hour on administrative work, does 4 hours of supervision and school rounds, and 1 hour reading.

Task	**Time**	**(%)**
Meetings	6+6+3+ 4+5+5 = 29	37.2hrs.
Observation of teaching	1+1+0+1+0+2= 5	6.4 hrs.
Supervision /school rounds	3+4+6+4 +5+4= 26	33.3 hrs.
Administrative work	3+2+3+3+ 2+1 = 14	18. hrs.
Reading	0+0+1+1+.1+1= 4	5.1 hrs.

Table 6.2: Time spent by Schools Heads on Major Tasks

Table 6.4 demonstrates a summary of the tasks the school heads were engaged in and the average time spent on each area of activity.

The data from the table show that the principals spend 37.2 percent of their time in meetings that entailed the briefing of school programmes and activities to parents and teachers; 33.3 percent of their time on supervising various activities and on school-rounds; and 18 percent of their time doing administrative work such as attending to paperwork, and overseeing school purchases or the school plant. They devote 6 percent of their time to observing teaching and learning, while spending only 5 percent of their time on reading. The relatively less time reading indicates the strong demands of the busy schedule in task areas such as meetings and supervision. Accordingly, the data reveals the school heads spend less time on instructional tasks including professional development of the teachers and other academic staff. These revelations suggest that they are over-loaded with the prescriptive tasks and

responsibilities (mostly administrative) and a great deal of time in meetings with parents and teachers on issues that are not directly related to instructional tasks. They include attending to parents' complaints and teacher grievances. They do not spend much time on activities such as professional development, or aspects related to observation of teaching, which may include teacher guidance and pedagogical issues. A possible cause of this imbalance of time is related to their specific job descriptions and time demands brought on them by activities which attempt to meet the demands of the teachers and expectations of the parents. i.e. heads are expected to be available at all times for their particular concerns or queries.

All the heads reported concern over the overwhelming administrative tasks they had to attend to as part of their routine work. Their frustrations were clear when they made explicit the struggles they have to cross the boundaries and try to find space for doing things they desire and believe in. Therefore, the evidence in this study does not resonate with the claim made by Ball and Goodson, who state that principals are not simply 'cardboard' cut-outs but real flesh and blood individuals with motives and emotions ...[that] are influenced by past, as well as contemporary events' (Ball and Goodson, 1985, p.13). In other words, school heads' actions, in theory, are driven by their personal goals, aspirations and values, and the participants in this study certainly have reported personal beliefs and values that have relevance to this assertion. However, a gap seems to exist between such beliefs and values and their actions they carry out on a day to day basis .In other words, what they say they do as a school leader is in conflict with other logistics such as their autonomy and availability of resources.

The following quotes illustrate instances of leadership activities reported by the schools heads which were supposedly driven by their values. Rani says that, *'For me, unity is an important aspect of my personal philosophy, and therefore, eliciting cooperation is a priority which demands my time in engaging with teachers and parents. These include regular meetings with teachers and parents. In the meetings, we discuss school programs and activities together.....sharing ideas with the staff,*

and incorporating their ideas into the day-to-day operations of the schools is a continuous routine of my work in the school' (RI1).

This statement implies that Rain acts as a democratic leader, and unity is an important aspect of her philosophy. She acknowledged engaging in activities such as team building and sharing ideas which were driven by her beliefs and values, rather than imposing autocratic instructions on the subordinates as a way of working towards the school goals. Moreover, the above statements appear to be sceptically made in terms of the political and administrative space available for Rani to practice a democratic leadership style in the school in a system where most of the educational and administrative decisions are taken at the central level (see, Chapter 2). In my experience, the school heads in the Maldives do not have the political space to determine institutional goals in collaboration with the staff. We only share with teachers the instructions and information provided by the Ministry, and regular staff and parent meetings are a regular feature of the school so as to inform of upcoming programs and activities in the school. In effect, the school heads are bound by many rules and regulations that stifle other aspirations.

Interestingly, all the participants reported engaging in activities that seem to increase productivity and staff commitment. These included giving extra responsibilities and providing space for individual initiatives. For instance, Buddy said, *'I give my teachers responsibilities other than teaching tasks such as organising school activities and programs that include dinner nights, school concerts and sport festivals, and music shows'*(BI1). Like Rani, Sithi also alludes to this intention when he says, *'I mobilise shared energy of team members, and encourage them to take more initiatives in areas of innovative teaching and extracurricular activities for the kids' (SI2).* Buddy further asserts that, *'teachers are professionals, and therefore, I do not dictate my terms all the time, but allow them to practise what they think is right and good for the students'* (BI1).

The above assertions suggest actions driven by underlying beliefs and values. However, such actions can be more appropriately described as personal strategies

dealing with issues than of relevance to the school heads official job description. Similarly, motivating staff was another action that the participants repeatedly emphasised as part of their engagements in the school. For example, Rani observed that, *'the staff expect my guidance and instructions.....providing them with what they demand is a way of keeping them motivated to do their work...'*(RI1). She noted that motivating her staff by encouraging them with incentives like praising good work and recognising excellence work (RI1). The other school heads also reported employing staff motivation as a management strategy, and adopting mostly personal attributes such as being charismatic and trustworthiness to motivate their staff members towards school goals (SI1/ KI1/ DnI1/ DI1/BI1), which are supposedly rooted in their personal philosophies and values. However, these data (what the school heads say they do) casts a note of ambiguity with regard to the spaces and resources available for them to engage in effective motivating strategies for staff. For instance, taking extra responsibility is not always welcomed by teachers, particularly when there is no forthcoming reward or financial benefit. In my experience, teachers often complain when extra work is assigned with no financial or other personal benefits.

Building trust was an activity reported by the participants. They affirmed mutual respect was an important quality they valued and that they worked towards achieving the trust of the staff. For example, Sithi maintained strategies for the following activities and programs as scheduled, making the staff feel important by acknowledging their discretion rather than nagging them for minor mistakes (SI1). She also noted making herself accessible to the teachers whenever they needed her. She had regular formal conversations and informal chats as part of building trust and relations with the staff. In fact, all participants reported engaging in formal and regular dialogues with the staff as a strategy for building relations within the school and as a means of promoting a democratic form of leadership and management style. Nevertheless, the notion of building trust is also an ambiguous area, highlighted by the fact that school heads clearly reported they were not in positions to meet the demands and expectations of the teachers

Another dominant activity reported by the school heads was building relations with parents as a strategy to improve the teaching and learning process. They all felt it was an important part of their job (RI1/ RI2, SI1/SI2 KI1/KI2 DnI1/DnI2, DI1/DI2 /BI1/BI2). They spent time listening to parents and attending to parents' needs and concerns as a means of building a relationship with the community. For instance, Kab says that, '*one of the greatest challenges is keeping the parents satisfied and happy*' (KI1). Similarly, Dhonbe concurs with this:, '*In addition to regular parents meetings, I have mechanisms set up in the school to develop and maintain relationships with the parents and the wider community such as suggestion boxes and periodical questionnaires*' (DnI2). Like Dhonbe, Sithi follows this line: '*I spend a lot of time with parents and listening to them as a way of way building bonds with them....it is an important part of my work.*'(SI1). Davoodh also noted that,' *I provide opportunities for parents to get involved and contribute to school programs'* (DI1). Building and maintaining relationships with the parents is evident in the above quotes. It is also a clearly defined responsibility in the job description of the school head (see, Appendix, D),

There is also evidence in the school logs and principals' personal diaries further indicating the disparity between what they say they do and what really occurs as their actions. For example, the table below illustrates the amount of time the school heads spend on tasks that have no direct relevance to their personal beliefs, values and aspirations. In effect, the school heads spend their time in engagements which are defined in the job description. According to the job description, the school heads have to conduct meetings with teachers and parents on a regular basis, observe classroom teaching, do internal supervision by walking round the school and attend to administrative work Table 6.3 illustrates the weekly time schedule and the nature of the tasks involved.

According to the data reported in Table 6.1, the school heads spent 37.2 % of their weekly time in meetings and 33.3 % in supervision and school rounds. The data supports the findings reported in the narratives of the school heads, which suggest engagements in actions the authority see as important part of their job.

Weekly Schedule	Specific Activities	Number of Hours per Week
Meetings	Reviewing events and activities. Briefing administrative and pedagogical instructions from the Ministry, meeting targets and expectation Addressing parental concerns and complaints. Raising issues of general discipline in the school, Attending to Ministry and departmental meetings.	37.2 hrs.
Observation of teaching	Spent time in classes to observe a teacher , providing feedback in the office after the observation session	6.4 hrs.
Supervision /school rounds	School rounds-walking along the corridors, staffrooms, assembly hall, attending to school events and activities	33.3 hrs.
Administrative work	Paperwork, answering telephone calls, overseeing maintenance work, and budgetary matters, supervision of clerical staff and their work, dealing with staff conflicts and disciplinary matters	18 hrs.
Reading	Ministry circulars, instruction leaflets, reports, academic and professional literature.	5.1 hrs.

Table 6.3: Weekly Time Schedule of School Heads

These include mostly actions that have relevance to bureaucratic obligations, parental expectations and staff demands. Parents have expectations to be informed of school programs and activities, and progress of their children on a regular basis. The teachers and administrative staff expect them to be guided and supervised by the head teacher, while the Ministry expects the school heads to follow specific instructions and meet the national targets and objectives. These elements are reported in the biographies of the school heads and are evident in their job description. Interestingly, these actions are in conflict with what the school heads reportedly said they were doing and the strategies they employed in the management of their daily activities in the school. These include motivating staff, building trust, shared decision-making and team-building. Such practice suggests the influence of their

exposure to professional literature and is implicit as a source of their personal theories, which are not fully realised in their daily work.

It is clear from the discussions above that the school heads' job is essentially that of implementing the Ministry's policy and following specific instructions to manage the schools. Their task is about conveying policies to the staff and the parents while ensuring every effort is made to put them into practice. The findings in this study suggest specific difficulties the school heads face in the existing role. They seem to be related to the activities and changes that are taking place in the wider society. The schools heads raised these issues and reported the increasing demands of the teachers and expectations of the parents. According to the school heads, they are not professionally prepared to fill a role that meets the needs of the students and the demands and expectations of the teachers and parents in terms of their professional autonomy and the administrative space available to them. They reported many difficulties as principals in dealing with certain aspects of their work. These included issues of staff development and curriculum-related matters. Some school heads related these issues as being part of the social and political developments that were taking place in the country. For instance, Buddy referring to the context says that, *'There is total chaos in the social and political sphere of the country....there is so much demand on the public sector...people have no faith in the government policies ....social values like respect, consideration and integrity have been severely traumatized....the young and the jobless resort to drugs to battle against their miseries, issues of social injustice are pervasive and insurmountable (BII)'*

The excerpts in this study suggest the school heads are bound by bureaucratic obligations. At the same time, they are stressed by dealing with unhappy parents whose demands cannot be met in the existing role and work conditions. The tensions seem to grow as the school heads try to negotiate their activities with respect to their beliefs and values. In other words, there is a clash of logic in terms of effective practice. The next chapter is designed to explore these issues and address how the school heads go about managing the ongoing conflicts and dilemmas.

6.2 Conclusion

The data reported in this chapter suggests that the actions of school leaders are not always congruent with their theories or understanding of leadership. The school heads seem to be overly-involved in delivering the Ministry's mandate and fulfilling bureaucratic obligations rules and regulations. There seem to be no distinct differences among the schools heads in their daily engagements in schools or leadership actions as they all seem to have a specific focus on supervising school programs and activities, attending to administrative tasks and conducting meetings. The supervision aspect of their work includes monitoring teachers' work, which is characterised by popping in and out of classrooms, conversing informally with staff and being on the spot to give advice or help in the day to day activities of the school. The data suggests that they spend considerably less time on observation of teaching and on their professional development. Although the principals noted some aspect of planning, their engagement is only confined to school programs and activities. They are not involved in the major planning process that takes place in the Ministry that has relevance to what they do in schools. They are primarily occupied with operational plans to implement centrally determined objectives.

The data also highlights the school heads' engagement with parents and unrelenting interactions with teachers. They all strive to have good cooperation with staff and parents, and invest plenty of time with them either to solicit their views on matters of immediate concern or seek support for various programs and activities in the school.

The findings also indicate that when at all possible, the school heads attempt to use personal discretion to engage in actions that are driven by their personal beliefs and values. These include leadership aspects such as acting as a model, being inspirational, promoting team work and motivating staff.

In the analysis of this chapter, three different threads of action were identified. These include official duties and responsibilities, engagements in meeting the demands of the teachers and expectations of the parents, and some actions with reference to head

teachers' personal goals, aspirations and values. However, the findings suggest the way that school heads address management and leadership issues, their aspirations, and their levels of anxiety differs enormously within the boundaries of practice. These aspects of their leadership can be defined as a clash of logic in terms of effective practice that involves various conflicts and dilemmas. The next chapter is designed to explore these issues and address how the school heads go about managing the ongoing conflicts and dilemmas.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LEADERSHIP IN ACTION III: MANAGING CONFLICTS AND DILEMMAS

7.0 Introduction

The findings reported in the previous two chapters indicate that school principals in the Maldives are confronted daily with conflicts and dilemmas as a result of the dissonance between the different logics which inform aspects of their work. In other words, school heads experience a conflict between the text book prescriptions, their personal goals, beliefs and values, and the lived reality of their leadership in schools, whilst following a job description imposed on them by the educational authority. At the same time, there is pressure from parents and teachers whose expectations and demands differ from the official agenda; particularly with respect to the school's leadership role. Parents expect the school head to play a central role in curriculum management, staff development and determining resource allocations and academic priorities. Meanwhile, teachers expect more professional support and guidance from the head teacher. During the period of the data collection, the bureaucratic obligations and the demands of the stakeholders at times have seemed to be more dominant than individualised beliefs and values and therefore, the school heads are confronted with new challenges that involve managing the dilemmas and coping with the contextual tensions.

This chapter examines how the school heads talk about the nature of these conflicts and dilemmas as a way of developing a better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, the primary school leadership in Male'. The discussions start as managing conflicts and dilemmas in 7.1, followed by philosophical dilemmas, professional dilemmas, organisational dilemmas and dilemmas with relevance to the community in 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and7..4, respectively. The findings and discussions are

based on the data collected for this study, entailing the interviews and biographical profiles. A conclusion is presented at the end in 7.5

7.1 Managing Dilemmas and Conflicts

As an experienced practitioner, I have come to see that conflicts and dilemmas are a reality within the organisational setting of schools, and that they are a part of school leaders' working life. However, what seems to be important is the nature of the dilemmas and how school heads go about dealing with them. This is the arena in which leadership and management must also operate, and it is thus space that is required, along with authority and some degree of professional autonomy, as it is here that judgment and discretion are demanded.

Some dilemmas, such as professional autonomy over bureaucratic obligations can be intense and become a stressful and time-consuming factor with regard to school leadership, leading to low morale and dissatisfaction. Indeed, effective leadership is associated with a degree of professional autonomy, which in turn leads to job satisfaction (Hoyle and John, 1995). It was, in fact, this initial concern that encouraged me to ask questions about school leadership leading to this investigation. The findings in the previous two chapters led to issues that reflect the ongoing conflicts and dilemmas of the school heads. These are reported as tensions over their personal theories of leadership, notions of professional autonomy, organisational issues, and concerns over dealing with parents and the community at large, aspects referred to as distinct dilemmas in this chapter.

school heads' statements with regard to personal vision, passion for progressive education and a democratic form of leadership are described here as philosophical dilemmas. In turn, the views and opinions with regard to school heads' limitations on matters of school curriculum, the capacity and resources available for schools heads to undertake professional development of staff, and pedagogy are categorised as dilemmas of professional autonomy. Finally, the management issues reported as

bureaucracy, staff recruitment, lines of communication, and academic and administrative arrangements in the school are listed as organisational dilemmas. The school heads' difficulty in meeting the demands and the expectations of parents and members of the community, while working in constrained circumstances are also referred to as dilemmas. The dilemmas are explored in the following sections.

7.2 Philosophical Dilemmas

Philosophical dilemmas appear to be an outcome of a interplay between bureaucratic impositions and the personal value stances of the school heads in terms of their personal goals and aspirations. The school heads seem to have their own individual set of beliefs and values that are drawn from their own biographies and are evident in the form of their personal goals and aspirations. These include their personal vision, passion for teaching and learning process, and their desire for innovative teaching and a democratic form of leadership. Personal beliefs and values are linked to an individual's childhood upbringing, the cultural and class influences at home, his/her own experience of schooling, education and training, and the gradual induction as a teacher and subsequently as a leader (see Sugure, 2005). Hargreaves (1998) associates beliefs and values with emotions and asserts, 'the emotions that we experience and express and the effects of these emotions on ourselves and others, are developed in families, cultures and work situations where we undergo emotional learning' (p.137).

In the stories of the schools heads, there is evidence to suggest that they hold values that have relevance to notions such as democracy, equity, collaboration, and inclusivity. They seem to display passion for the learning process and working with youngsters, for the feeling of community within the school, and between the school and the local community, which are rooted deeply in their biographies. The school heads have come to see the world of the school as a human place, where individual desires and aspirations are respected, while recognising the importance for personal space for social and emotional development. They also seem to have conflicted

emotions and feelings over the heavy bureaucratic goals and objectives, seeing themselves as also beyond the official agenda of the schooling and striving to create space for personal beliefs and values. Basic human values (freedom and respect for others), moral values (fairness and justice), professional values (responsibility as educators) and social and political values (participation, loyalty and helping others) are dominant in the narratives of the school heads. The following quotes demonstrate the espoused beliefs, values and philosophical stances. Rani, for instance, states: *I moved to the position of principal because I wanted to share my knowledge and experience.....and the love of education...leading a school I see as a challenge and fulfilling my long cherished desires'*. Furthermore, she says, *'As a teacher I wanted the best for my students ...so I work hard with the students to achieve excellence so that my students would get higher scores than others in other classes. I followed the same philosophy when I worked as a supervisor...and as a principal. I still work in the same mindset' (RI1).*

The above quotes indicate Rani's passion for education and embrace a wider instructional role in the school for the improvement of school outcomes. Similarly, Kab and Buddy state that they became principals because they wanted to offer the highest possible education to students. They recognised a moral obligation to extend a 'sincere service' to the community. For instance, Buddy states that, *'I became a principal thinking that I could contribute more to the school, and be in a pivotal position to influence' (BI1).*

Like Rani, Kab says, '*My priority is to deliver a good service. I want to do everything in my capacity to improve the teaching and learning process...and thereby, improving the learning outcomes of the students' (KI1).* Dhonbe also asserts: *'I believe that the most important aspect of a leader should be to have a vision for the school and conveying that vision to the staff and bringing them aboard... I have a vision as well... I want my pupils to strive for excellence in their quest for comprehensive scholarship, so they may grow up to be healthy , happy , responsible individuals and wise, upright citizens who will serve as worthy role models for future generations' (DnI2).*

The above excerpts indicate the school heads have personal beliefs and desires and aspirations in terms of what they want to do and engage in their role of principalship. However, the school heads reported difficulties in terms of practising what they believed. Explaining the dilemma, Sithi noted: *'It is often hard to practise what one believes due to the bureaucratic rules and regulations.... there is too much demand on the teachers and pressure on schools and it is not good for the staff morale', and as the head of the school, I spend too much time in meetings and do not get time to do things I like most' (SI2).* Elaborating on the dilemma she says, *'The teachers do a full teaching shift of seven hours, get a lunch break of two hours, and then report to school to do games and other extracurricular activities for students on a daily basis, which is a requirement on the part of their job according to the Ministry's regulations. But it is a major concern for me, as the teachers get tired at the end of the day,, and often come to school unprepared for school lessons the next day, this affects classroom teaching and has negative school outcomes (SI2).* She also points out a need for the school to override bureaucratic impositions, and explains, *'A school should be an environment where teachers and other member of staff are conscious of their responsibilities and plan ahead to achieve institutional goals. The staff should work in harmony with others exhibiting tolerance, openness, respect and concern for each other. As professionals, we should recognise the expertise of individuals and harness their potential for school improvement. A school should be a safe environment where valued- based habits are practised and individual differences are catered for' (SIA)*

Similarly Kab says: *We follow orders and instructions from the Ministry officials. They grant the resources and expect the school heads to use them according to their prescriptions...while working in such conditions, one cannot promote teacher initiatives, find space for teachers and other staff in the decision- making process, or apply democratic principles to realise school goals' (KI1)*

Dhonbe also makes an observation about this dilemma: *'I see a political issue that projected improving the performance of the school as a responsibility of the school heads without the means to achieve the end. In this regard, school tasks for management and teachers are prescribed by the Ministry official - our participation in deciding school work is minimal, and this I see as a moral issue between right and wrong in how people should be treated. I believe in democratic principles and fairness, and feel it is morally wrong when staff are being over- taxed and treated harshly employing authority to get people to work' (DnI2).* This suggests Dhonbe feels challenged by the conflict between what he is obliged to do and what he believes he should be doing with regard to his role as principal. He clearly raises a concern for greater involvement of the staff in planning school tasks and decision-making process, and it appears to be this democratic value he upholds which clashes with the bureaucratic impositions. Dhonbe also points out teachers' heavy workload, which he considers as an ethical issue, as is also explained by Sithi which I quoted above.

Concepts of collaboration, values of shared decision – making, delegation and team work are common and dominant in the narratives of the school heads (see, biographies in appendix B), but it seems hard for them to realise these notions within a limited professional and administrative autonomy in schools.

In the discussion here, it can be seen that there is a clash of logics in terms of what the school heads want to do in their leadership role and what is imposed on them by the authorities. There seems to be dissonance between the bureaucratic obligations - the role of a manager – to enforce and uphold all rules and policies of the Ministry of Education; to be responsible for implementation of national goals and objectives for the school; to represent the school as an administrative unit; to be a messenger and a defender of the Ministry's decisions; and their personal beliefs and values in terms of their role in the school. It is clear that the leaders have ambitions to move the learning process forward, to nudge teachers to explore more creative pedagogies and to involve parents more consistently in supporting the learning of their children. They have aspirations to respond to issues that have relevance to the needs and care

of the students and the community, concern and connectedness for others, concern for democratic values, and a desire to deliver a meaningful curriculum. However, these aspirations are stifled by the dilemmas they live through in their day to day operations of the school where they come up against autonomy and organisational elements and possibly the demands of the community. These issues are addressed in subsequent sections.

7.3 Professional Autonomy

The narratives of the head teachers reveal that they have are faced with a number of obstacles with regard to their professional autonomy in the school. Professional autonomy is referred to here as the capacity to make judgments or take decisions over the content and processes of teaching and learning. In this respect, the school heads' autonomy is constrained and they do not have the freedom to practise their professional skills and competence in areas of their specific concern. These include issues of curriculum (aims, topics, teaching materials), pedagogy (teaching styles and strategies, allocation of time, modes of assessment, standards of achievement), and staff development and evaluation.

There is indeed evidence from the international literature and research which links school effectiveness and instructional leadership, learner-centred leadership and pedagogical leadership (see, Harris, 2002). According to Leithwood and Jantzi (2000), effective leaders exercise an indirect but powerful influence on the effectiveness of a school and on the academic achievement of students. Further research indicates the quality of leadership determines the motivation of teachers, and the quality of teaching in the classroom (Fullan 2000; Sergiovanni, 2001). The school heads noted a concerns about the centrally- controlled curriculum, stating the importance of a school-based curriculum and space for instructional leadership to develop and deliver a curriculum that meets the needs of the students. They also recognised the difficulties in addressing matters of effective teaching when teachers are recruited without their consultation. The school heads indicated tensions when

school's academic programs and activities are planned in the Ministry with no reference to schools. These include staff development programs, assessments and evaluation.

The head teachers' autonomy has been more recently a contested topic, particularly in a globalised policy environment, where market ideologies seem to have infiltrated school policy agenda all over the globe (Sugure, 2005). The local leadership of the principal and teachers appears to be in the process of being smothered by relentless waves of policy directives from the national governments that are intended to create uniformity regarding the learning and teaching process (ibid). The effects of this particular global trend stated above have some relevance to events that have taken place in the last three decades. For example, in the Maldives until 1979, teachers and community leaders used to manage schools with full autonomy with teachers in charge of the schools determining the curriculum and selecting texts for students. They, thus, planned the academic programs and administered tests, while also deciding promotion and retention for students. The schools were run by senior teachers or school leaders with full authority and autonomy over administrative and academic aspects of the school.

In the year 1980, however, the educational structure of the Maldives was restructured as part of streamlining the system, which was introduced with reforms of the public management system in the late 1970s (see NCLHR, (2001). The role of traditional schools (or form of educational delivery) has since been replaced by a centralised educational system, with the change making the school heads deliver a role that is now prescribed to them. In other words, they follow instructions regarding all aspects of administrative functions and academic activities. At the outset, this change could be justified as an act of necessity, and as a mean for the government to establish a standardised education system, and may also have suited the school administrators then (see Chapter 2 for details on structural changes and policy). However, the participants in this study reported that with the increasing demands of the teachers and expectations of the parents, there are tensions in terms of their responsibilities and autonomy in schools (see, Chapter, 2).

For instance, with regard to autonomy in the area of school curriculum, Rani says,*'The teachers find it hard to follow the Ministry's instructions regarding school curriculum and find it very difficult in meeting the specified objectives within the time framework allocated for the academic subjects... and as the school head, I could do little to help them' (RI2).* She also says that; *'there are demands from the teachers and pressure from the parents with regard to the curriculum....and I don't see any solution unless we have more professional autonomy with respect to lesson content, teaching methods, appointing the teaching staff and determining school activities. There are too many extra-curricular activities imposed on us by various associations in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. These aspects are making the teachers and the senior management more stressed' (RI1)*

Like Rani, Kab also describes the predicament in terms of her autonomy in school curriculum: *'As school heads, we only implement the national curriculum, so we are in that sense, managers. We have no involvement in planning and developing the curriculum. The primary school curriculum is outdated, and is therefore not relevant to the schools now. The needs of the students and parents' expectations have changed since the introduction of the national curriculum in 1984. As a principal, I feel the need for a change in the areas of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and evaluation...unfortunately, the voice has so far been stifled' (KI2).*

Dhone adds: *Talking about autonomy...we do not even have autonomy to conduct exams, make a change to the curriculum, hire or fire a member of staff, make a change to the physical structure of the school, no say in budget allocation or of students and assessments and evaluation...the codes of conduct for students and teachers are predetermined by the authorities...we only conduct activities and programs instructed and approved by the Ministry. Almost all the decisions are taken there at the top level* (DnI1)

Davoodh concurs with Dhonde when he says: *'The Ministry determines curriculum objectives, assessment and evaluation procedures, recruits teachers and other*

members of staff, undertakes supervision, gives specific instructions to draw up the school timetable, allocates budget and control finance, determines rules and regulations for staff and students, and intervenes with school initiatives and maintains control over the school at all times' (DI1)

These excerpts graphically depict the school heads desire for professional and administrative autonomy, and their struggles in terms of conducting the day to day activities of the school under the existing circumstances, and also to become an effective leader. The following comments of Sugure (2005) have relevance to the predicament faced by the school heads in the Maldives.

'Prescriptive solutions handed down to principals tie their hands in several respects and leave little room for either negotiations or professional judgment, while autonomy becomes something of a romanticised journey. Now this problem of prescription may seem just something associated with the passing of professional autonomy as a distant memory, but in fact it is more than that ...it is nothing less than the central dilemma of current educational reform initiatives across the Western World' (Sugure, 2005:xvi).

On the same note, Goodson describes prescriptive leadership as a dual-face phenomenon. He asserts, 'prescriptive leadership has two faces. Firstly, the leaders themselves are prescribed to and thereby have their missions defined elsewhere by other hands: but leaders who are prescribed to too often tend to prescribe to others in turn, that is, to the teachers and administrators who work in their schools. Prescriptive leadership then works in such a way that other hands prescribe tasks for each person. Nobody then has 'ownership' of their domain and the result is a pervasive sense of drift disorientation, demoralisation and dissatisfaction in so many of our schools' (Goodson, cited by Sugure, 2005: xvii)

The above comments are useful to relate to the situations faced by the schools heads in the Maldives. They follow policy directives along with managerial instructions and implement the agenda of the Ministry, while prescribing and imposing the same

instructions on the teachers. The traditional role of the professionals enjoying a high degree of autonomy no longer holds, and the New Public Management model seems to create tensions between the school and the authority. Therefore, the bureaucratic imperatives serve to limit individual autonomy in the interests of the collective purposes of the organisation. A dilemma seems to emerge when school heads are confronted with teachers and parents, when they cannot mediate or compromise the needs of the teachers and expectations of the parents as a consequence of their limited administrative and professional autonomy. The school heads reported that they are constantly faced with parents who are not happy with the content of the school curriculum, and who expect the them to work through and with the teachers to improve various areas of the curriculum so as to offer a something which is more intellectually challenging and reflects the knowledge and skills that will help them to advance their studies in the secondary and higher education systems. At the same time, teachers demand professional help in term of continuous in-service training in the form of short courses and workshops to upgrade their knowledge and skills in the subject area they teach. The school heads noted these issues as major challenges they face; particularly when curriculum development and staff development activities are centrally controlled, and are run in accordance with the priorities of the officials instead of the suggestions forwarded by them. Such demands seem to result in intense pressure on schools.

In the section below, a discussion is presented to highlight the specific organisational issues that have relevance to the tensions faced by the school heads.

7.4 Organisational Dilemmas

Organisational dilemmas are referred to here as difficulties in dealing with issues such as time-tabling, conducting school exams, codes of discipline, financial and administrative activities. Often, the school heads are advised by officials who lack the professional knowledge and experience of school management. Under the existing circumstances, they are unable to create a personal or collective vision to

inspire and motivate the members of the school community, or to articulate their educational philosophy and values.

All the participants reported difficulties in managing the school in a centrally controlled system as most of the management functions are undertaken by the Ministry of Education (RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1/ RI2/ KI2/BI2/SI2/DnI2/DI2). According to the school heads, the difficulty lies essentially with Ministry officials' understating of school circumstances and the real climate of events in the school. They also noted that unless the school heads have a more autonomous role in the affairs of schooling, innovation and change will not be possible.

The school heads also reported lack of professional staff as a major concern (RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1/ RI2/ KI2/BI2/SI2/DnI2/DI2). It was noted that the schools have management teams to support and operate the day to day activities of the school and for the academic development of the school. These members of staff do not receive any management training though other than their initial teacher training. The head teachers strongly voiced the importance of staff development and their own role in building a professional learning community to achieve school goals. However, they reported not having the means to create conditions for such ends although they are expected to provide effective organisation and management within the school they lead. Meanwhile, they are also supposedly responsible for the quality of learning and teaching and for pupils' achievement.

Staff recruitment is also a conflict issue that emerged from the interviews ((RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1/ RI2/ KI2/BI2/SI2/DnI2/DI2). The principals reported the difficulties with the process when it is done at the central level and have no say of their own about who teaches in their schools. According to them, such a process leads to poor selection of teachers and unnecessary delays in recruitment and appointment of staff. Connected to this, they also observed that this issue leads to problems in teaching and poor discipline in schools as the selection and recruitment criteria conflicts with the personal philosophy of the school-head and the senior management staff (RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1). However, they are expected to

accept and implement the top level decisions on allocation, distribution and transfer of staff to their schools at the expense of staff instability, high turnover and low school outcomes. When the management of staff is undertaken at Ministry level, staff discipline was also reported as a significant issue for the principal to deal with.

The head-teachers raised concerns over the quality of the staff and maintaining codes of professional conduct. These included issues such as the appointment of untrained local teachers, and inexperienced teachers from abroad who are not culturally familiar with the locality, and whose values and approaches in dealing with the children often conflict with the norms and the ethos of the school. There is an obvious concern over teacher supply as there are not enough locally trained teachers to cater for the increasing student population every year, and teaching is apparently not an attractive career for school leavers. Therefore, many locally trained teachers lack sufficient knowledge and skills to deliver effective teaching, while the effectiveness of the graduate teachers is affected by the quality of teacher training received prior to their teaching job. Moreover, elements of apprehension were reported over individual accountability when they did not have the authority to exercise their leadership freely, and nor did they have any control over material and human resources.

Maintaining student discipline is also an issue reported by the school heads (RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1/ RI2/ KI2/BI2/SI2/DnI2/DI2). This was ascribed to the quality of some teachers and the increasing numbers of students the schools had to cater for in one single school session. These single school sessions were recently introduced to meet public demand due to increasing numbers in schools. Each single school session accommodates over 1200 or more students, creating issues around space and pressure for the teachers to practise effective teaching. The school heads reported that the issue of discipline could be linked to the minimal authority left with teachers and schools; particularly when students were aware of the limits of their teachers and school personnel in dealing with misconduct. Furthermore, the Ministry is unable to supply the schools with enough trained and skilled teachers to handle and maintain discipline in large classes of 40-50 students.

Red tape is also a theme that emerged from the interviews ((RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1 RI2/ KI2/BI2/SI2/DnI2/DI2). This included delays in staff promotion, and rewards and other incentives that were essential to maintain the good work and the morale of the staff. Such instances lead to senior and experienced teachers leaving the teaching profession to go to more attractive jobs; particularly in the private sector, where they enjoy higher salaries and other benefits. Salaries, increments, and rewards are processed in the Ministry of Finance through the President's Office when recommendations are submitted by the Ministry of Education. It is apparently a complicated and bureaucratic process that reduces the school heads to an insignificant role. The procedure for salary increments, and rewards for the staff are predetermined by the President Office with the Ministry of Education following specific instructions and guidelines of the President Office to give promotions, salary increments to teachers and other staff in schools. The school head has no significant part in the process other than providing the personal data of his or her staff in the school. This includes their attendance records, sick leaves, teaching performance in terms of students' achievements, attendance in professional training and records of disciplinary actions

Communication is also a related issue that was reported by the participants (RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1/ RI2/ KI2/BI2/SI2/DnI2/DI2). According to the participants, too many lines of communication with the Ministry make it very difficult for the heads of schools. It requires them to report and be accountable to many department heads in the Ministry. The school heads also reported difficulties in dealing with some staff when some communications and instructions may be delivered directly to them by the Ministry. This, for example, may involve the director general in charge of school administration contacting an assistant principal, a supervisor or a teacher to brief them about a policy or to instruct them to take part in a professional program conducted by the curriculum department or school supervision section without the knowledge of the school head. This makes the school head experience a sense of impotency and awkwardness in terms of their authority and dealing with his/her staff, causing much embarrassment and frustration.

Moreover, such instances and direct communication from the Ministry to his/her subordinates was reported as leading to teacher defiance and negligence of regular work in the school.

Timetabling is another issue reported by all the school heads (RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1/ RI2/ KI2/BI2/SI2/DnI2/DI2). According to the participants, timetabling gets more complex when the school has multiple levels of schooling under one roof, which includes primary and middle schooling. They also reported that managing two shift schools while conducting various extracurricular activities and accommodating community events are issues the schools have to deal with. Moreover, the participants reported that all the issues become more serious and acute when there is a shortage of teachers in classrooms. All the school heads recognised dealing with the issue of teacher shortage as always frustrating, particularly at the beginning of every academic year. There are always more students enrolled to schools than the projections for the year, leading to additional classes and teachers. However, the schools are not provided with additional teachers as demand arises and are always instructed to use the existing teachers to take on the extra load. The pattern follows every year, and the school is forced to accommodate more and larger classes. When parents complain about the class sizes to the Ministry, untrained secondary school leavers are recruited to teach the first years.

It was reported by the school heads that curriculum development is an exclusive responsibility of the Ministry of Education (RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1/ RI2/ KI2/BI2/SI2/DnI2/DI2). It is designed and delivered to the schools by the curriculum department of the Ministry of Education. The school heads' responsibility is to deliver the curriculum content as prescribed by the authority and they cannot make any alteration or bring any changes to the formal curriculum. There are books on specific guidelines and instructions for different subjects taught in the school, but these books are outdated as they have not been revised since it first printed at the time of the introduction of the primary curriculum in 1980. The books, then, were written by locals without research and training, and therefore, do not quite suit the present circumstances and the needs of the students. In my experience as a principal,

I had to deal with many parents who raised the issue of the effectiveness of the existing curriculum in terms of the knowledge base and pedagogical issues. Parents were not happy about rote learning or repetitive and unchallenging tasks given to kids in class. They had often suggested exploring and discovery learning, and adoption of methods of teaching to boost students' cognitive and social development, while encouraging them to become independent learners. Similarly, the school heads also recognised this issue around the learning environment and stated an immediate need for an updated and a relevant curriculum that meets the needs of the students to prepare them with knowledge, skills and attitudes to become successful in their secondary and tertiary education. Apparently, the quality of the curriculum and its content, and the mode of its delivery is a clear, parental demand, and an aspiration which cannot have been significant when the existing primary curriculum came to life in schools at the beginning of 80s.

Another concern of the school heads is teacher performance and appraisal. There is no specific teacher appraisal process that takes place in schools, although they are being appraised by a common system used for government employees for appraisal. According to them, the existing scheme is of no relevance as it does not provide the kind of support and incentives teachers need to improve their work

The school heads also raised issues with regard to having to deal with poorly or ill-defined visions, missions, objectives and organisational goals by the Ministry of Education (RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1/ RI2/ KI2/BI2/SI2/DnI2/DI2). It was reported that the instructions from the Ministry are often mixed messages. For instance, the schools would get a circular from the Ministry instructing them to reduce extracurricular activities in the school, and to focus on teaching and enrichment activities or remedial programs. In another circular, the school heads would then be asked to work collaboratively with various national sports organisations to involve students in games and prepare them for inter-school tournaments. At the same time, a third circular from the Ministry would state an emphasis on improving local language and to using it more widely during lessons in different subjects. Subsequently, this may be followed by an inquiry into why

English language scores are declining and with instructions to conduct programs for students to improve English language skills. Therefore, it is very hard to measure the extent to which school objectives are achieved, while they also find it extremely difficult to supervise and check whether standards/ targets have been attained, or even to make a proper assessment of their achievements. Consequently, school heads cannot contribute much to making the system effective and to increase efficiency and accountability of staff.

Furthermore, it was noted that schools do not have the capacity to evaluate their progress when it is not well-equipped to conduct proper monitoring (RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1). Staff are not well-trained in terms of checking the specific behaviour, values and attitudes of students and teachers. These include assessment procedures and providing remedial /corrective measures. Such professional aspects are also often dictated by the authorities, such as determining the number of weekly unit tests.

The school heads reported that most teachers do not like supervision (RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1), and do not like to be observed and get their work monitored. The heads also noted that teachers' reluctance towards supervision is often related to the negative feedback given by untrained and unskilled middle managers who supervise their work. One head-teacher said, '*I believe regular supervision of teachers is important for a school's success, but it is an area of weakness in the school as our supervisors are not fully trained to guide the teachers and offer academic support...but as part of my job, I do assign the supervisors with tasks of supervision... and this unfortunately, leads to dissatisfaction on the part of both parties, teachers and supervisors*'

The supervisors are appointed by the Ministry, and the selection is based upon reports of the external supervision team who merit qualities such as commitment and individual personality rather than professional knowledge and skills. These supervisors do not receive any form of training prior to their appointments, thus often lacking sufficient knowledge and skills with regard to curriculum and

implementation. In this respect, they are unable to offer a clinical role where they could use a diagnostic approach to observing classrooms and giving feedback to the teachers.

The head-teachers noted the importance of supervision and monitoring to improve the performance of the school and to exercise control over standards and targets (RI1/ KI1/ BI1/ SI1/ DnI1/ DI1). However, they all raised concerns over the limited authority they held to exercise the essential functions related to supervision and monitoring. They all acknowledged engaging in the implementation of educational plans as directed by the Ministry, but they do not have an important role in evaluating those plans in terms of learning skills and the utilisation of resources, which they believe is a great obstacle towards progressive education and school improvement.

In all this analysis, it is clear that the school heads are surrounded by a number of organisational issues that have a great impact on the effectiveness of their role as school head, while solutions to many of the issues seem far from their reach. The findings suggest a need for the authorities to recognise the difficulties of the school heads and provide assistance and support to allow them more professional and administrative space to make the schools more effective and also acceptable to the parents and the community. To compound matters, at present, school heads have to deal with unhappy parents whose demands are ever- increasing, where dealing with the latter seems to be creating more tensions for schools heads while at the same time trying to implement bureaucratic obligations and maintain individualised beliefs and values. These issues are discussed in the following section.

7.5 Dilemmas Associated with the Parents and the Community

The school heads face a number of difficulties in dealing with parents and the members of the community. Some of these tensions are linked to the dilemmas referred in the previous sections. The quality of education is a major of the parents as

they are not always happy with the quality of many teachers and they also demand changes in the school curriculum to prepare the students for a changing society. Parents want to have access to schools and be involved in matters concerning their children's education more than ever before. Under the existing organisational circumstances, there is little the school heads can do to meet such demands and expectations. For example, displeasure has been expressed regarding ongoing complaints of secondary schools and children's basic skills in subjects like mathematics, science and English. At the same time, parents also want to get involved in their child's education to ensure that they receive an education that is meaningful and relevant, expecting unlimited access to school that includes visits during teaching time and attending co-curricular and extracurricular events, as a way of monitoring the school activities and programs. The following quotes highlight the dilemma.

Rani says that, '*As the school head, I find myself constrained in between the parents and the authority, I get pressure from the parents to improve the quality of teaching while I do not have sufficient resources and facilities to improve the academic activities of the school'* (RI1).

Kab also states her concern and explains how she copes with their demands: ' *there is too much pressure from the parents, and they always wanted to complain about teachers...about the quality of teaching, the amount work given to students to do at home, teachers not marking their work , or about discipline in the class... all I can do is listen to them , listen to their grievances and make false promises'* (KI1). Buddy, however, refers to his constraints as: '*there is obvious public demand for quality schooling, and we feel the pressure when we do not have enough good teachers...at the same time the number of students are also increasing every year'* (BI1)

Like Buddy, Kab and Rani Dhonbe also agree:'*There are high expectations on the part of the parents to produce good results ...but to produce such outcomes our hands are tied for such ends. For example, many of our teachers are incompetent and not skilled enough to deliver teaching that meets the expectations of the*

parents....the class sizes are also too big (more than 40 students in some cases), the curriculum is outdated, the school is run in two shifts taxing teachers overly (DnI1). Davood also says, *'Dealing with parents' complaints about teaching , while taking heed of teachers' grievances is the stress I have to live with everyday'* (DI1).

The above excerpts clearly indicate the dilemmas the school heads must manage as part of their working life. There seems to be enormous pressure from parents and the community as a whole regarding the quality of teaching and learning in the school. The school heads are confronted with issues arising from large class sizes, incompetent teachers and a lack of resources to meet the demands and expectations of the parents. At the same time, teachers demand more professional support in their work but the schools do not seem to have the capacity to engage in programs that would help build the professional development of its staff. These issues highlight the conflict between the parents and teachers' expectations and the bureaucratic obligations involved in the school heads' job. The teachers and parents expect the principal to be in a position to address their complaints and grievances, expecting a resourceful leader with influence and power to get things done in the school. However, the situation seems that it will remain a bone of contention until changes are made and school heads are granted access to resources and more autonomy to run their schools

7.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to highlight some of the conflicts and dilemmas faced by school heads in terms of philosophical issues (personal beliefs, and values) professional and administrative autonomy, management and administration, and dealing with the parent and the community. As mentioned before, there is a clash of logic in terms of effective practice. The school heads reported concerns over the strict bureaucratic rules and regulations that stifle their staff and their own imaginations and creativity in the school. In this respect, they are discontented with regard to autonomy; particularly on issues of staff recruitment,

curriculum management, and resource management. They also expressed a need for them to be a part of the bigger picture of schooling that gives them the opportunity to be involved in formulating school plans, targets, objectives and strategies.

Increasing demands of teachers and public seem to be issues of significance to the head teachers too. A major concern is the mismatch between the bureaucratic obligations and the public demands. Under the existing circumstances, the school heads are under enormous pressure and stress to perform their leadership role while compromising their personal beliefs and values in a highly charged environment. Consequently, their leadership/managerial tasks have become increasingly more burdensome and are likely to continue and exacerbate the situation as long as the existing structure remains intact.

The following, final, chapter is designed to offer some suggestions, based on the findings reported in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight and outlines the conclusion of this study.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS

8.0 Introduction

This study has sought to understand school leadership following an exploration of the perspectives and practices of one of the key practitioners in the education system; primary school heads in Male', the Maldives. Specifically, the study examines the relationship between Head-teacher's espoused leadership aspirations and accounts of their practices. The findings of this study indicate a clear dichotomy between their perceptions (theories) of leadership and what they do as school leaders, which seems to be a result of a clash between logics that inform aspects of their work such as bureaucratic obligations, personal philosophy and demands and expectations of the stakeholders. A number of leadership dilemmas were also identified which have relevance to the mismatch between the perceptions and practices of the school heads, leading to a question on quality and appropriateness of their role as educational leaders. This chapter provides a summary of the findings, its implications and recommendations for practice.

It starts with an overview of the research journey in 8.1. Next, the findings of the study are reported as clashes of logics in 8.2 along with an account of emergent issues in 8.3, followed by limitations in 8.4 and talking back theory and methodology in 8.5 finally, a discussion on a case for greater discretion and autonomy is presented in 8.6 followed by a list of recommendations in 8.7. A methodological reflection is also provided in 8.8 followed by a discussion on implications for further research in 8.9. At the end of all this, a concluding comment is included in 8.10.

8.1 The Research Journey

The study had three objectives which were addressed through research questions. The research adopted a constructivist philosophical approach and therefore used biographical data (using interview instruments) and documentary data to collect the desired information. The data was analyzed essentially using the Miles and Huberman (1994) framework specific for the purpose of qualitative data. The main findings are summarized below as clashes of logic with reference to research objectives and their corresponding research questions as illustrated in the Table 8.1.

	Objectives	**Questions**
1	Examine the perception and understandings of leadership from the perspective of school principals in Male	What do the principals understand by the concept of leadership?
2	Identify the actions of school heads as they undertake their leadership role[s]	How do the principals describe their leadership practices?
3	Identify the differences between conceptions and practices	Are there differences between their conceptions and practices?

Table 8.1: Objective and Questions

8.2 Clashes of Logics

Conceptualising Leadership – Beliefs and Values in terms of personal aspirations and goals

The school heads seem to have been informed of leadership concepts that are derived from contemporary school leadership literature. Thus, they identified and associated leadership with concepts such as planning, having vision, providing direction and

decision-making. These notions are echoed in various leadership models documented in the literature. For example, Sergiovanni (1991) offers these concepts quite comprehensively in his typology of leadership forces such as educational/human (*guiding others and giving direction*) force, technical *(planning*) force, and symbolic (*creating and developing vision*) force. These notions also appear in other leadership models. For instance, Leithwood (1994) conceptualises transformational leadership along the following dimensions:

- Building school vision
- Establishing goals
- Providing intellectual stimulation
- Modelling best practices and organisational values
- Demonstrating high performance expectations
- Creating a productive school culture
- Developing structures to foster participation in school decisions (p.8).

It was interesting to learn that the all the principals associated leadership with the above concepts though their capacity to perform such leadership functions are confined and constrained by the existing organizational structure. Their conceptualisation of leadership can be linked to their professional training and exposure to western academic literature.

Moreover, the principals also make a distinction between leadership and management that also resonates with literature on leadership and management. For example, they associate leadership with concepts like charisma, vision and setting goals, while management with organizing and monitoring, supervision and other day to day administrative tasks (see, Northouse, 2003). They support the view that leadership is something more than management (see Hoyle and Wallace, 2000) and share the view that both leadership and management tasks as important. In this respect, the explanations of leadership and management provided by the participants replicate a repertoire of concepts presented in educational management and leadership literature. They seem to be reiterating what 'others' say about leadership or what they have read about it.

Such notions seem to be well-established and conceptualised by the school heads. However, the participants struggled to offer a clear meaning of concepts like vision and mission, goals and giving directions, or even express a vision and a mission of their own, or identify any specific educational goals or directions of which they can claim ownership. It was, therefore, not possible to elicit individualized theories that were built upon life experiences.

Concepts of vision and mission appeared to be increasingly influenced and blended in with national aspirations or universal goals of education and schooling. For instance, when principals were asked about their visions, Rani said: '*Our vision is to bring in better quality to the education in the Maldives'*. Sithi asserted that it was important to '*create a school environment where teachers and staff are conscious of their responsibilities and plan ahead to achieve institutional goals. The staff will work in harmony among themselves exhibiting tolerance, openness, respect and concern for each other. As professionals, all will recognize the expertise of individuals and harness their potential for school improvement. The school will be a safe environment where value-based habits are practised and individual differences are catered for through the application of a multi-mode delivery system'*. Buddy added that what was crucial was the ability to: *'create a learning environment where all children will enjoy their learning, enhance their intellectual and emotional development, while being inculcated with moral, social and aesthetic values'*

The above reflections indicate universal goals of education or national aspirations, suggesting their understanding of leadership tasks and responsibilities are influenced by external elements that may have relevance to what they do or wish to do as school principals. This is possibly linked to their exposure to the combined influences of academic literature and the prescriptive nature of their managerial functions.

The school heads associate management with concepts which also appear in literature. These include planning, organising, communicating, monitoring, supervising, evaluating (see, Northouse, (2003), and link them to the operational aspects of the school. However, tensions were also identified in the narratives of the

school heads in terms of what they believe themselves to be doing in schools and what is required of them by bureaucratic obligations, and demands and expectations of the parents and teachers. Nevertheless, the school heads recognise the importance of a leadership role that engages them in the bigger picture of education such as planning school goals, determining school priorities, all in which they currently have no significant role to play. They uphold values such as exercising a democratic form of leadership, and concepts such as shared decision-making, teamwork, building trust and relationship with the staff and the school community as important dimensions of effective leadership. However, there seem to be bureaucratic barriers within the system which undermine such values, and thus, school heads seem to be confronted with the dilemma of putting what they believe into practice.

Actions of School Heads – Role Prescriptions

The school heads unanimously reported being engaged in activities that were specifically assigned to them by the Ministry of Education. The following themes were reported as the major actions/functions of the school leaders in the six schools.

- Building and maintaining relationships with the authorities, the staff, the parents and the community
- Motivating and providing support for the teachers and the staff
- Day to day operations of the school (planning and organising the school activities and programs within the school and attending to the administrative duties)
- Counselling students and teachers
- Guiding others
- School level decision-making

The findings suggest that the school leaders are mostly engaged in managerial activities rather than leadership functions which are documented in the leadership and management literature. The findings do not suggest that the participants engage in aspects such as developing vision/ mission and setting strategies for bigger goals. On the contrary, it would seem that time mostly spent on organizing and attending to the operational tasks and activities of the school. These include tasks such as dealing

with paperwork, answering phones calls, attending staff and student disciplinary matters, conducting staff and parents' meetings, corridor supervision, timetabling and being present at meetings organized by the Ministry and its departments. It was also found that the school heads do not engage in tasks such as allocating resources, making job placements, and establishing rules and regulations (see Appendix D, job description of school heads), which are all apparently linked to the centralized system in which they operate.

However, the heads reported having engaged in aspects that have relevance to *leadership tasks* as mentioned and discussed in chapter 4 such as seeking commitment, team buildings, motivating and inspiring staff. They seem to operate these tasks by means of personal traits and qualities such as being a role model, and using charisma, and principles of equity and democracy (see, biographies of school heads in Appendix B). The narratives of the school heads though clearly show that they desire more professional autonomy and access to resources to deliver such actions more effectively and efficiently, the findings indicating a number of difficulties and tensions for the school heads while playing a 'robot' role in the school. These include issues and dealings with respect to the demands of the teachers and expectations of the parents and they reported a lack of capacity in the school in terms of resources and professional pace to help enable them to meet such demands. The school heads also reported that the demands of the parents and teachers on school leadership were not always congruent with the bureaucratic obligations; issues which would seem to be critical when they clash with the personal aspirations of individual principals which were referred to in the previous section.

Professional autonomy

The school heads reported a number of difficulties and tensions arising from their understanding of leadership, their official duties and responsibilities, and the role expectations of teachers and the parents with regard to school leadership: their professional autonomy and their discretion to act in terms of bringing improvement to school curriculum, staff development, assessment and evaluation, procuring and

allocation of resources and deciding school priorities. These functions are largely operated by the Ministry as part of their policy to streamline public education and offer a standardised and closely monitored delivery of schooling to young people. (see Chapter Two). In others words, the work of the school heads is regulated, directed, supervised and assessed. These policy initiatives were introduced at the beginning of the 1980s, and affected school leaders' autonomy and their traditional leadership role in schools, requiring them to take on more administrative and managerial responsibilities. Appearing to be a part of New Public Management strategies, these changes infiltrated the public service sector, bringing with them the influence of international agencies and donors. In the past, school head had contrastingly been in control of all academic and administrative activities of schools, and the changes served to affect their status.

It is quite clear that in the narratives of the school heads, they see the importance of more autonomy in areas that are controlled by the educational authorities. In other words, they desire a more prominent identity for themselves as a means of becoming more pro-active and in a more pivotal position to influence the young people under their care. However, they reported dealing with the afore-mentioned conflicts and tensions as part of their commitment to attempt to serve the interests of students and of wider national goals while operating within existing constraints.

8.3 Emergent Themes from the Study

One of the themes that emerged from this study is the stressful and ambiguous nature of the role of the principal. All the principals recognized the importance of their role, though they raised concerns over the limitations and constraints involved in their daily undertakings while attempting to meet the increasing demands of students, teachers and parents. The findings suggest that the participants in this study desire a

more independent and autonomous role to perform their duties and exercise influence on others and the proceedings of the school.

A second theme that appeared is the leadership style. All the school heads seem to embrace values of cooperation, collective decision-making and teamwork. Despite an existing autocratic structure issuing orders from the top, the data suggests that school leadership style is exercised with some democratic principles possible such as sharing information with teaching staff and parents, and incorporating staff views into the decision-making process with regard to school activities and programs.

A third theme that emerged from the study is the importance of context. All the participants appreciated the values of collaboration and the involvement of parents, teachers and other staff in the decision-making process and extending the leadership functions beyond the bureaucratic prescriptions. Thus, school heads all professed a desire to do this although there was no indication to suggest that the views of parent and teachers were solicited and used in the affairs of the schooling. Such notions were only implicit in individual head teacher's personal aspirations.

A fourth issue to emerge from this study is the notion of distributive leadership. It appears that there is a trend towards distributive management/leadership in the imagined leadership. The participants reported the importance of involving teachers and parents as alluded to above in the preceding paragraph. There is, indeed, data to suggest that certain information is shared with teachers and parents on school matters, including school policy (determined by the Ministry) , school rules and regulations, ongoing programs and activities. These are practices which thus align with school heads' imagined distributive leadership on aspirations for staff and parental involvement in the decision-making process extending to various leadership roles, to the teachers and middle managers, and a wider role for the parents. This is a perspective advocated in distributive leadership by scholars (see, Bennett et al, 2003; Harris et al, 2002).

Based on its findings and subsequent discussions, the study develops the following conclusions. In general, there are some shared understandings amongst practitioners on how they interpret the meaning of leadership. It was also found their understanding of leadership is largely influenced by what they hear and read about leadership rather than a perception based on a personal philosophy/biography. Also, an important finding was a certain dissonance between their beliefs (theory) and practices. This is linked to the centralized and bureaucratic nature of the system that obliges the school heads to strictly follow instructions from the top-down hierarchy on all matters of their leadership and managerial functions (see, Lauglo, 1997).

8.4 Limitations

There were many challenges in conducting this study. These included technical challenges in conducting a qualitative research for the first time by the researcher. Having to deal with large amount of data that included online logs, transcripts of face to face interviews, and asynchronous interviewed materials by e-mail was a great challenge, particularly when half of the data were collected while being based at Bristol, and the rest later from the visits to the schools in Male.

There were also other concerns in the stages of data collection and analysis. For instance, during the interviews, the participants showed a degree of hesitance when responding to politically sensitive topics and issues. This was linked to the nature of the island communities, where the fact that everybody knows everyone makes them cautious about what they say about work and events in the school. In fact, the researcher was not able to develop conversations with the participants on specific topics that had relevance to particular frustrations arising from their personal dealings and interactions with their superiors or critical incidents. Thus, the participants were cautious with regard to their responses in all the interviews (synchronous, asynchronous and face-to face). Subsequently, some aspects of data

might have been adversely affected, and in turn, the quality of information compromised.

This research took place in the midst of political change which may also have affected the quality of the data. In the political heat the school heads were not comfortable to discuss issues that had relevance to the school effectiveness and efficiency. Further, my personal link to high profile political activists (two of my brothers at the time of this research) forced me to avoid particular questions as to maintain their trust and to ensure and safeguard their position against any possible threat or intimidation. Thus, my school visits were short and minimal. This inconvenience was unavoidable in the process of the data collection

The primary sources of data for this research are the interviews of the school heads. However, it would have been insightful if Ministry officials were included in the interviews as they play a major role in the day to day operations of the school, a feature which is apparent in many small states (see, Commonwealth Secretariat, 1997).

Although all the school heads in Male' were involved in this study and data was collected from their schools, the scope of this research does not extend to any of the school heads in the outer-islands. This omission was done out of necessity to maximize the available Male-based resources for the sake of funds and time. However, inclusion of such input and insights would, of course, have constituted a useful and meaningful contribution to this research journey, irrespective of the differences in educational provision and facilities between Male' and the other islands.

8.5 Talking Back - Theory and Methodology

This study has responded to a need for educational research by presenting specific features of school management and administration in a small state. It has explored

school leadership and identified a strong link between leadership and context, a relationship which often resonates in contemporary school leadership and management literature (see, Haber and Davies, 1997; Foskett and Lumby, 2003; Fertig, 2000; Dimmock and Walker, 2005; Crossley and Holmes, 1999). A number of contextual elements were identified when the school heads talked about leadership and management practices. These include the nature of the school governance, bureaucracy, forces of globalization, availability of personal and material resources, and professional and political space to exercise leadership. Many of the elements referred to above have relevance to the smallness of the state and its characteristics. For example, as a small state system, the operation of the schools in Male are centrally controlled and the tasks of the school heads are prescribed and supervised by the educational authorities. The policies and priorities are determined by the authorities according to the availabilities of personal and material of resources. For instance, getting all the primary aged kids in schools may be a higher political priority than a school head's priority of small sized classes or in-service training for teachers in their schools.

As a small state and a developing country, the Maldives have limited professionals, administrators and advisors at the level of educational policy-making and implementation. Therefore, ideas are borrowed from large systems or imposed by sponsor agencies and international bodies such as World Bank, UNICEF and Commonwealth. Given the situation, when the school heads were asked about leadership and what they do as school leaders, the participants mostly talked about interpretations and activities described in academic texts or models offered by educational consultants working within the international networks. In this respect, the school heads described leadership as having a personal vision and goal-setting, decision making, providing guidance, and then management as planning, organizing, delegating, supervising, monitoring, and motivating and developing staff. Such responses can be linked to the influences referred above, and the global forces on education policy transfer and borrowing that have had a particular influence on small states, which was discussed in Chapter. 4.

Further, this study reveals some tensions or dilemmas the school head face in terms of what they are instructed to do, and what they aspire to do , and expectations on the part of the parents and teachers. Such tensions exist as day to day realities of the working life of school heads or contextual elements, both helping and obstructing the course of action. Thus, this study contributes to the view that leadership and management must be addressed with reference to context in order to develop a better understanding of the everyday realities in question.

This study has employed a qualitative research approach using semi –structured in – depth interviewing and documentary analysis to tease out the perceptions , practices and dilemmas of schools heads in Male'. This has provided a range of data which has been used to construct personal narratives of the practitioners which are the heart of this study.

8.6 A Case for Greater Discretion and Autonomy

The product of this study is a discourse on educational leadership that has been drawn from the perspectives of local practitioners. The significance of this work cannot be over-emphasised as there is no record of any research undertaken on primary school leadership in the Maldives. The focus of this study has been on principals' perceptions, practices and dilemmas, so as to develop an understanding of the leadership phenomenon from a local perspective. The findings of this study indicate that the participants' imagined leadership does not always follow their actions, while, the mismatch between leadership perceptions and actions are leading to some form of dilemmas in the day-to-day operations of the school. There is a conviction on the part of all the participants that their role is confined and constrained with burdensome bureaucratic rules and regulations. Following procedures, duties and responsibilities specified by the authorities is becoming increasingly stressful, making it hard for the school heads to engage in professional practices, or act on values they uphold. However, questions are raised over the basis

of their values and its relevance to the context of practice, as the findings in this study suggest a need to re-conceptualize school leadership and revisit the tasks and responsibilities of school heads in Male' to address the management issues and leadership dilemmas referred in the previous sections. It would, indeed, seem clear that the importance of school leadership has not been well-recognized by the educational authorities to fully utilize the potential of its leaders (see, chapter 2). Furthermore, the difficulty of their task is further compounded by there being no specific programs to train and develop school leaders, who have been appointed from experienced teachers, with no leadership and management training.

This study recognizes the importance of leadership in the delivery of schooling and proposes change in the existing policy on management policy and practice. Apparently, there is a growing recognition of the importance of school leadership, and subsequently, an increasing emphasis on the quality of leadership in schools in international literature; particularly in industrialised countries (see, Heck, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1993; Cheng, 1994; Brown and Conrad, 2007; Fullan, 1992; Smylie and Hart, 1999). For instance, it has been recently reported that principals in modern societies must among many other things be able to:

- manage real change where necessary;
- hold together an effective team;
- manage deployment of physical resources;
- manage knowledge and ideas
- prioritise his or her time in order not to get distracted from these essential tasks (source, OECD, 2001).

These notions clearly highlight the importance of school leadership that seem to have universal recognition. Similarly, the notions (though not with the same intensity) are echoed in the findings of this study, where the principals' desires and aspiration are reported. They all recognise the importance of their leadership role, and voiced their desire for a fundamental system change which gives priority to their training and professional development, greater professional autonomy, flexibility and more freedom on the part of their job to bring about change and innovation in schools.

With reference to future prospects and change, the following suggestions appeared in the aspirations of the participants

- Space for initiatives and developing individual and collective vision for the school.
- Opportunity for professional development in terms of time and resources.
- More prominent role in allocating school resources.
- Exclusive role in hiring and firing its staff.
- Full autonomy over instructional management including curriculum, assessment and evaluation.
- Space to adopt a personalised management approach.

It is recognised that these aspects that have emerged in the form of aspirations cannot be ignored for the following reasons: Firstly, these elements also often appear in well-recognised literature as tasks of school leaders (see, Leithwood and Levin, 2005; OECD, 2001, Bush, 2008).

Secondly, they represent the voice of practitioners, who have a better perception of the reality of their situations than the policy-makers who dictate their practices. The data most certainly indicates a desire of the individual principals to become visionary leaders, motivators and innovators and agents of change, and therefore, it is postulated that such aspirations could lead to good practice and a greater capacity to nurture the professional development, awareness and philosophies of those around them.

The data also points to the school heads' dependency on the authorities, which may be the biggest obstacle in their way in terms of achieving more effective practice. There is, in fact, a sense of uneasiness and low morale among the participants with regard to the administrative space available for them to perform their role effectively, and the existing structures do not permit the school heads to operate in ways that make them feel a sense of 'ownership' of their own work. To remedy this, it is suggested that what is required is more administrative space and a more autonomous role to improve job satisfaction, and at the same time, become more accountable to their community.

8.7 Recommendations

Based on the above analysis, the following four recommendations are proposed for consideration for improving practice.

First, transfer of the following functions from the Ministry to Schools, delegating them to school heads.

- Hiring and firing of its staff
- Staff promotion and rewards
- Curriculum Development and production of teaching materials
- Budget planning and resource allocations.
- Planning school activities and programs.
- Student enrolment.
- Administering tests and examinations.
- School rule and regulations.

The role of the authority needs to change from that of administrative/controlling to one of facilitator, moving from rules and regulations to goal-based result management. In this way, school heads can exercise more professional autonomy and involve themselves in tasks that have relevance to the needs of the students and teachers.

Second, consider expansion and development of professional training for school leaders to offer new skills and knowledge.

Third, implement a more open approach to leadership by extending it to include parents and the wider community. There is a need for the authorities to consider the view that changes in schools work best where everybody is involved and when all parties feel a sense of 'ownership'. Distributed leadership is an approach that is being tried and experimented in many places with a view to improving excellence in education (see Crainer and Dearlove, 2005; Powell, 2002). The rhetoric on decentralisation and school –based management needs to be addressed with stronger political will and commitment on the part of the policy- makers. .

Four, prioritise capacity building in schools to support its leaders to help them facilitate change and innovations in the system. This could include areas such as curriculum development, supervision and evaluation, and staff development.

8.8 Methodological Reflections

This study adopts a constructivist approach to the research. This stance was taken because the research questions posed in this study could be best answered by using a qualitative approach, its goal being to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situations. For this purpose, broad and general, and open-ended questions were posed to the participants, the school heads. In the first phase of the data collection, online interview was employed and was found challenging and invaluable in this study. The technique was adopted because of the unavoidable personal circumstances of the researcher, who was unable to conduct the interviews with the study participants face to face at the beginning of the project. Thus, the researcher collected the data and conducted the interviews using internet online conversations (synchronous interviews) and e-mail (asynchronous interviews). The collected data was used to develop biographies of the school heads and subsequently analyzed.

At a later date, the researcher was able to make a trip to the Maldives when the political situation at home changed in favor of the researcher. This provided the opportunity to construct face- to- face interviews with the participants and collect school documents such as personal diaries and school logs and minutes of staff meetings, which were collected over a period of three months. The post-interviews were found to be quite useful to verify and validate the previous data, which were conducted on the basis of interviews with the participant as referred above.

Although it is practically impossible to involve everybody in the qualitative data, the researcher was fortunate to do so in this study as there are only six primary schools in Male', and all the schools heads extended their cooperation with intense interest.

8.9 Implications for Further Research

This study has explored leadership perceptions, practices and dilemmas of incumbent primary school principals in Male'. It has revealed there are clear gaps between principals' definitions of leadership and what they actually do in schools. Acknowledging this dilemma, it is argued in this thesis that the school heads are not engaged in tasks and responsibilities that best suit them in terms of being effective and efficient. This underlying assumption is based on both the evidence of literature and findings of this study. The participants who were involved in this study provided the insight that most of their problems are related to the system in place, referring to a bureaucratic structure with rigid rules and regulations. It has been voiced that if the role incumbents gain more autonomy and obtain more administrative and managerial space, they will do a better job. However, research is required to further determine the implications for leadership with the sort of increased autonomy desired by the participants, or research that could guide policy-makers to identifying what aspects of educational governance should be devolved to school level and which ones should remain at the centre.

Furthermore, the findings in this study demonstrate that definitions of leadership provided by the participants constitute a variety of ideas which are documented in contemporary literature on educational and management and leadership. Thus, research is required to explore the source of this influence and its implication for practice.

As this research is limited to only schools in the capital, it would be also an interesting and useful project to conduct research into schools outside Male' to explore the perceptions and practices of their school principals. Such research could be useful for comparing and drawing conclusions which could guide policy-makers to address issues of equity and help deliver a common curriculum across the nation.

8.10 Concluding Statement

Finally, this study contributes to the argument that leadership cannot be defined and applied universally. More importantly, it provides insights that practitioners' understanding of leadership may not necessarily be consistent with their practices, making this whole issue more complex. This also contributes to claims that leadership notions have relevance to their context of practice. It is evident in this study that what the school heads believe to be leadership is not always what happens in practice, a circumstance seemingly due to the organisational settings in which the practitioners are placed. These may have several implications for school leadership and future development of education and schooling in the Maldives. It highlights the need for MOE to revise the existing policy on school management and leadership.

This study recognizes school leadership is critical to improve quality of education, as in an era of globalization and focus on knowledge economy in modern societies, quality education is a necessity that cannot be ignored or neglected by any nation if they are to survive and be competitive in the global market; irrespective of its size or vulnerability. Unequivocally, quality education is the key to national development goals, which require educational leaders with skills and knowledge to deliver the educational objectives put in place. To realize this end, school leaders will require an environment of democratic educational governance where leadership becomes a collaborative and individual action among the community of practice. However, if educational leaders have illusions as to what educational leadership is, and their actions are reduced to a set of instructions provided by a few bureaucrats, then the goals and aspirations of the nation may be put in jeopardy. This study has outlined existing leadership dilemmas and concludes that educational leadership in general, and particularly school leadership, need to be brought to the forefront of the educational agenda in the Maldives.

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Appendices

Exploring Leadership: Practitioners Perspectives: Synchronous Interviews with the School Principals

Appendix A

Section: 1 Principal's Background

1. Name of the Principal: .....

2. Gender .....

3. Age: .....

4: Education and Training: .....

5. Years of Principalship: .....

Section 2: Leadership: General

6. Why did you become a principal? Do you have personal goals? If so what are those based on? Do you consider yourself in a position to achieve those goals? How much of autonomy and professional authority do you have as a principal? Can you give me some examples?

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7. How well prepared were you for your principal position? What were your training and experience before taking up the position?

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8. Is your job a learning process? If so what do you learn and how do you learn once in the job? Can you give me some examples?

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Section 3: Leadership: Philosophy, Beliefs, Values and Ethics

9: What is your perception of leadership?

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10. Are leaders born, if not, what is your view?

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11. What is your perception of management?

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12. How would you distinguish between leadership and management?

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13. Do you consider yourself a manger or a leader? If so why?

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14. What is your philosophy of education?

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15. How much does your philosophical understanding influence your work?

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16. Does experience play a part in establishing your particular leadership? If so, can you explain?

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17. What are the specific influences that you bring to your role as the school head?

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18. Are the forces (internal and external?) that influence your work? If so, Can you give me some examples?

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19. Are there particular leadership or management text books that have influenced your thinking in the area? Can you give me some examples?

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20. What kind of leadership style do you employ? Can you explain why you use this particular mode?

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21. Who are educational leaders? Can you give me some examples?

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22. What does a principal need to be successful?

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23. What are the particular leadership qualities required of principals in the Maldives today?

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Section 4: Leadership Actions

24. What are your leadership tasks/responsibilities? Can you give me some examples?

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25. Are you leadership responsibilities/tasks being self- determined? Or is it being influenced by other forces? If so, can you give me some examples?

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26. What are your management tasks/responsibilities? Can you give me some examples?

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27. Are you managerial tasks/responsibilities being self-determined? Or is it being influenced by other forces? If so, can you give me some examples?

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28. What decisions do you make? And how do you go about making them?

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29. How often are your decisions/judgements challenged? If so, by whom

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30. What decisions do you find easy to make?

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31. What decisions do you find hard to make?

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32. Are you often satisfied with your leadership decisions?

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33. What do you do when confronted with a really difficult decision?

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34. What helps you deal with difficult decisions?

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35. What aspects of your leadership practice you find to be effective in your work as a principal? Can you give me some examples?

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36. What aspects of work do you enjoy most? Can you give me some examples?

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37. What aspects of work do you dislike?

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38. How often do you engage in professional development programmes?

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Section 5: Leadership Dilemmas and Politics

39. Are there occasions as a principal in conflict with the expectations on your role as principal. If so, can you give some examples?

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40. What is your role in formulating the school policy? Who are the other partners?

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41. How much of influence do you possess in procuring the resources for the school?

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42. How much of influence or authority do you have in determining the internal affairs of the school?

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43. What dilemmas or difficulties do you face in your decisions in terms of a) curriculum leadership b) resource management c) staff development d) building and maintaining parents and community relations e) building and supporting community of learning f) any other?

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44. What is the nature of your difficulties?

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45. How do you deal with the difficulties or the dilemmas? What strategies do your employ to over come your difficulties?

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Thank you for your kind assistance and cooperation.

Appendix B

Biographies of School Heads

Principal Rani (pseudo name)

Rani works in a government primary school with a student population of 2100 students. There are 156 members of staff in the school with a teaching staff of 103. The school is run as two shift schools. This is because the school has 20 physical classes and can only accommodate 800 students in a session. First session starts at 7.00am in the morning and finishes at 12.45pm. The second session starts at 1.00pm in the afternoon and finishes at 6.45 pm.

Rani was born in Male'. She had her primary and secondary education in the girls' school. She was an active student and took part in school activities. She reported holding many leadership positions in the school- as a prefect, house captainship, and head of the school's literary association.

Rani's initial interest in teaching stemmed from a national program that was conducted to motivate school leavers to go into the field of teaching. Consequently, after completing her secondary education she joined ITE (Institute of Teacher Education) in 1982, to do teacher training.

At the time of the interview, she had been acting as the principal at her school for two years.

Rani became a principal because she was ambitious and wanted to share her knowledge, skills and experience with the others. Moreover, leading a school was seen as a challenge. She was self- motivated to move beyond the classroom into the wider environment of the whole school. What lay behind her motivation was her determination.

When questioned about leadership she described leadership as getting people together and guiding them towards a particular direction, as this unity was an important aspect of her personal philosophy. Thus, eliciting cooperation and working towards collective goals were her priorities. She believed in a school where people should work as a cooperative unit. For example, principals, teachers, students and non-teaching staff in schools should all function as a team. Therefore, she applied strategies such as sharing ideas with the staff and incorporating theirs into the day to day operations of the school. In that sense, she sought to be a democratic leader who promoted primarily participative leadership. In Rani's view, many problems could be avoided if the staff and students were highly motivated. For her, motivation is a key determinant in achieving the school goals.

Rani also sought opportunities to enhance her knowledge and skills. Therefore, she used every opportunity that came by. She participated in a number of national and international seminars and conferences on education.

Rani believed that two major aspects have led to her success as a principal, which she stated as being teamwork and her personal experience that led her to reflect on her work and avoid many obstacles that she comes up against. Furthermore, she attributed her success to qualities such as setting an example to others, being resourceful, and promoting democratic values in work settings.

For Rani, being a leader meant possessing certain qualities. A leader must have some personal charisma, be committed, have knowledge and be creative too. One of the greatest challenges was keeping the parents, the students, and the staff happy, which meant a high commitment on the part of her job.

She believed empowering others is an effective strategy to be effective and efficient. In her view, unless people were empowered, commitment would be low. She saw that empowering people boosted the confidence of the team and, thereby, their development, and also goal achievement becomes easier, even though such goals have no individual ownership. Furthermore, she noted that inclusions of the ideas of others are a way of obtaining staff commitment.

In her day-to –day operations, Rani attempted to involve others and valued sharing ideas. This involved informal and formal discussions. In this way, she said that staff knew they were part of the decision- making process. She believed utilization of stake-holders in terms of listening to parents and interacting with students and colleagues is an essential quality in a leader. Therefore, parents were also given the opportunity to share their opinions in open forums. She also noted that she ran the school mostly by talking with other people throughout the day.

Her instructional leadership responsibilities included daily monitoring of teachers work to ensure that they followed the Ministry's prescribed objectives for each of the subjects and that they adhered to proper time allocations as provided by the prescribed schedule. She employed a strategy of practising 'management by walking around' to check the daily work of the teachers. Her responsibilities included all that happens in the school. She also noted that as a busy principal, she had to cover a great deal of ground. These included rounds from office to corridors to classrooms to sports hall, frequent visits to the teachers' work stations, and administrative blocks. Moreover, she has to be on call to be accessible to those who need assistance.

Rani acknowledged how important it was to be a role model as she held the position of a principal of a school of over 2000 students. She set examples for her students. Therefore, she was very careful about her code of conduct, values and her styles. She always recalled the teachers and principals who set examples to her when she was a student.

Rani acknowledged a number of constraints as a leader. These included the undue expectations of the parents, and pressure to meet the demands of the teachers and parents under constrained circumstances. There were also other external pressures imposed upon her, though she was not specific about those aspects. Above all, she stated that it was the nature of the centralized system that caused her the greatest difficulties. According to her, a lot can be done to improve the teaching and learning process if the school heads had more autonomy in the affairs of the schooling; particularly with respect to lesson content, teaching methods, appointing the teaching staff and organizing extracurricular activities,.

Despite all the odds, she continued to work towards her personal goals and obtain job satisfaction by doing best she could for the people she served.

Principal Kab (pseudo name)

Kab also works in a government primary school in Male' with a student population of 1800 students. There are 138 members of staff in the school with a teaching staff of 92. Like the school of Rani, Kab school is also run as a two shift-school for the reason described earlier.

Kab had her pre-schooling and secondary education in Male'. She was a student who worked hard and had a great passion for reading. She was an active student, and therefore, took part in various activities and programs in the school. She considers herself very fortunate to have an education that was unavailable to many girls of her age in her school days.

Her initial interest in teaching stemmed from her school days. Consequently, after completing her secondary education, she joined the ITE (Institute of Teacher Education) in 1986 to obtain a teaching qualification. In 1987, she started her career as a primary teacher. Over a period of seven years with a series of successive promotions, she became a principal. She attributed hard work and commitment to her success in her career. Once she became a principal, she wanted to do everything in her capacity to improve the teaching and learning process. In order to acquire this objective, her strategy was to develop a culture that would unite the staff of the school. Furthermore, she is a great believer in the parents' role in education, and thus, had a top priority in maintaining a suitable working relationship and eliciting their cooperation.

In her opinion, an effective leader should also have a vision, and should have the capacity to plan and achieve that vision with the help of other team members. However, she referred to the issue of balancing a personal vision against essentially implementing the Ministry's policy. Her job was conveying the policies to the staff and the parents, while ensuring every effort to put them into practice.

Nevertheless, she also noted her understanding of leadership had developed over a long period of time, and was continuing to be so from her involvement in the sphere of school management and administration. This included professional reading, attendance of educational seminars and conferences, interaction with professionals, particularly other principals, and most importantly attending to the day- to-day operations of the school.

Addressing the difficulties in dealing with many aspects of her work, she noted the increasing demands of teachers for their professional development, expectations of parents, and undue obligations to the authorities. In this respect, she also said she had to deal with frustrated teachers, angry parents and arrogant officials. According to her, many teachers were unskilled, class sizes were big, the curriculum was outdated, and pedagogy was old fashioned. Teachers employed dyadic modes of teaching for their convenience, and as a way of avoiding work to prepare their lessons. School teaching was oriented towards exams and tests. The teachers were over loaded with paper marking of the weekly unit tests and term examinations, which were conducted three times a year. The teaching hours were shortened to accommodate two sessions in the school. To make matters worse, some parents demanded rote learning and complained if teachers did not give homework and lessons to be memorized. The authorities gave way to the wishes of parents to subdue public pressure. Moreover, extracurricular activities imposed by the Ministry of Education resulted in counter reactions from teachers and parents. Such factors further lead to low morale of the staff and ineffective teaching. She was quite frank in addressing her difficulties and explaining the challenges as a school head in the existing circumstances.

She believed the way forward depended on how she dealt with people. In her view, understanding and building relationships is a vital element of being a manger or leader

Kab described leadership as being all about decision- making. However, she saw it as a collective function of the school team lead by the principal. In her view, a school is a complex organization and involves structures, resources and many people. Therefore, it is important to involve the staff in the decision-making process as a strategy to get their commitment, although the process involved organizing school level programs and activities. From her perspective, organizational goals are only achievable with collective effort and that comes with team participation in the decision-making process. Thus, she tried to apply the above notions in order to formulate her strategies when attending to the day- to- day operations of her school, and felt good about it.

Kab noted the stress as a principal she had to bear on a daily basis. There was little she could do to overcome her dilemmas. She said what kept her going were her persistence and love for the profession.

Principal Buddy (pseudo name)

Buddy also works in a government primary school in Male', with a student population of 2000 students. There are 150 members of staff in the school with a teaching a staff of 101. Like the other schools referred to before, it is also runs as a two shift-school for the reasons already described.

He was born in an outer-island, which is about ten hours by Dhon from Male'. He had his primary education in the home island and had his secondary education in Male'. After completing his secondary education, he joined ITE in 1983, and followed a one year program of teacher training. In 1984, he became a teacher. In 1987, he followed an advanced teacher training programme in Singapore. In 1991, he was granted a scholarship to do an English Language Teaching Diploma in the UK, followed by a degree program in English Language. In 1995, he resumed his teaching job in the school, and in the period of one year, he became a supervisor in the school. After a period of three years in the supervisory role, he became an assistant principal and later the principal in 2004.

He became a principal because he was ambitious and wanted to be in a position of influence to achieve his personal goals. He wanted to contribute to the nation in his capacity as a principal or as an educational leader. He wanted to offer the highest possible education to the students under his care.

He realized from the very beginning that the only way he could achieve his goal was with and through people. He believed collective effort was the gateway to his destination. For him, each individual in the school was important so his strategy was to motivate and inspire them. He believed school effectiveness can be enhanced through strong teamwork, and only achieved by identifying collective goals and guiding the students and the staff towards them, while keeping them motivated. When questioned about the basis of his principles of management, he acknowledged the influence of his reading of western literature on school leadership and school effectiveness, along with his academic exposure by means of attendance or participation in international and national seminars and workshops on school management and leadership.

In order to motivate the staff, he applied a number of strategies. This entailed sharing ideas with others and involving them in the decision-making process. Another strategy was assigning specific responsibilities and allowing flexibility to plan and organize activities and programs. He was a strong believer in sharing or distributing his leadership responsibilities with his teachers and the staff. That way, he was able to get commitment of the staff to achieve the set goals and objectives of the school

To establish his position as a principal, it required him to display certain qualities and skills. These included human aspects such as being considerate, good judgment, charisma, fairness, and ability to provide guidance and support to the staff and

students. In addition, maintaining good relationships with parents, teachers, students and the officials at the Ministry were equally important.

Buddy was clear about the difference between leadership and management. He related leadership to concepts like having a vision and planning, delegating, and evaluation. On the other hand, management was seen to be related to operational work in terms of day to day activities. He was clear that both management and leadership activities were important and believed they are vital elements to successful leadership.

He believed utilization of all available resources were essential tasks for a leader. In his school, he followed this philosophy, and maintained communication with parents and students. He often walked into classes and talked to students to elicit their views. He also established forums for the parents to raise their views and get involved in school programs and activities. Furthermore, structures were set up for the teachers to participate in the planning and decision-making process of the school.

Buddy acknowledged a number of constraints as a leader. These included public demands for quality schooling, lack of quality teachers, increasing number of students in schools, the existing policies of the Ministry. In the present circumstances, he described his leadership role as a difficult and complex one.

Principal Sithi (pseudo name)

Sithi also works in a government primary school in Male' with a student population of 1900 students. There are 142 members of staff in the school with a teaching a staff of 96. Like the other schools referred to before, it is also run as a two shift-school.

She had her primary and secondary education in a private school in Male' (private schools in Male' are supposedly less efficient and offer poor schooling). She did not get the chance to study in the prestigious state secondary school for girls. However, she worked hard and completed her secondary education successfully.

Sithi did her teacher training in 1983 and became a primary teacher in the following year. As a teacher, she was committed to serving the students. After teaching for five years, she was appointed to the post of assistant supervisor, then to supervisor, and subsequently, assistant principal. At the time of the interview, she was head of the school.

As a teacher, she enjoyed teaching and had great admiration for and valued it .Since her childhood, she had wanted to be a teacher. It was her dream. She was ambitious and hardworking. She managed her way up the ladder with the hope of achieving her desired goals, as a teacher and later as the school head.

She has always considered herself a teacher both inside and outside the classroom. As a principal, Sithi saw her long years of teaching experience as a great advantage in running the school

Sithi became a principal because she thought she could make a difference to the students. She believed it would create more opportunities for her to help students and contribute to the nation.

At the outset of her career, Sithi attended short leadership training courses and workshops. The training provided her with knowledge and confidence to guide teachers and to be resourceful.

Her philosophy of management was based on values like group work, sharing, cooperation and mutual respect. She noted that managing people was not an easy task. Thus, to be a successful manger, she believed one has to empower team members. She recognized the importance of teamwork and the value of others' views. She believed 'management control' should not be lying with one person. On the contrary, she saw control as an independent entity. Thus, her policy was based on democratic notions such as mutual respect, sharing and equality.

For Sithi, being a leader consists of possessing certain qualities too such as determination and perseverance. Moreover, a principal should be someone with a good educational background, and trained in leadership and management. In her view, successful principals are those who put learning at the centre and set high expectations for students and teachers. She saw a principal as an instructional leader who held democratic values, who has a vision and works to achieve it. According to her, effective principals are those with human resource management skills and communication skills.

For Sithi, leadership activities include planning, setting goals and providing guidance. On the other hand, management activities include organizing, monitoring and attending to the day to day activities of the school. She recognized that both leadership qualities and management activities are important to become a successful principal. She saw herself both in the role of a leader and a manager.

According to Sithi, school effectiveness can only be enhanced in an environment where teachers and members of staff are conscious of their responsibilities and plan ahead to achieve institutional goals. The staff should work in harmony with others, exhibiting tolerance, openness, respect and concern for each other. As professionals, all should recognize the expertise of individuals and harness their potential for school improvement. A school should also be a safe environment where value-based habits are practised and individual differences catered for.

However, she noted many obstacles to realizing her aspirations. Some of the difficulties were related to contextual factors while some were personal. She said it was often hard to practise what one believed due to external influences. These influences included obligations to the authorities, parental pressure and demands of

the students and expectations of the teachers. Thus, a lot of her time was being spent on meeting the expectations and demands of these stakeholders rather than putting her beliefs into practice. Hence, she had very little time to reflect on her work or consider personal philosophy.

In dealing with many of the dilemmas, Sithi adapted various strategies. These included teamwork and building relationships with parents, teachers, community and officials at the MoE. She recognized the importance of collective decision-making and staff consultation to the overall effectiveness of the school so she had over a period of time developed structures within the school for staff consultation. These included supervisory level meetings, grade level teacher meetings, staff meetings and senior management meetings.

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In day-to-day operations, Sithi involved others and gave value to shared ideas. In this respect, she stated she was able to develop social cohesion among the staff, which helped everybody to feel part of the school. Furthermore, she employed a whole range of strategies such as formal and informal discussions and corridor conversations with teachers and other staff to elicit their cooperation and commitment to school goals.

Essentially, she recognized the role of principal as a hard one to effectively put into practice. It required personal commitment and sacrifices which she considered were worthwhile at the end of the day.

Principal Dhonbe (pseudo name)

Dhonbe also works in a government primary school in Male' with a student population of 2000 students. There are 151 members of staff in the school with a teaching a staff of 100. It is also run as a two shift-school.

At the time of the interview, Dhonbe had been principal of his school for 4 years. He was an experienced principal who had worked in a number of schools over a period of ten years.

Dhonbe became a principal because he wanted to deliver a service that would satisfy parents and the wider community. His preparation for the position of principal included his initial teacher training followed by management courses abroad. He became a principal soon after the completion of his teacher training and management course. He believed his understanding of leadership had been developed, and was continuing to be developed from his involvement in the wider world of education. This included professional reading, attendance at conferences locally, nationally and internationally, attending professional development courses and seminars, and also from interaction with fellow principals. Of all these, Dhonbe considered ongoing interaction with his colleagues as the most important component of his professional development.

Dhonbe was clear on the leadership aspect of his work, which he defined as being a role model, being able to listen to others, and most importantly, to have a vision for the school and conveying that vision to the staff and bringing them on board to work towards the vision.

According to him, the principals in the Maldives were performing mostly managerial tasks. These included attending to paperwork, finance, office administration, maintenance, monitoring, supervision and evaluation of teaching and learning. Thus, he reported not getting enough time to attend to the leadership aspects of his work, such as realizing his vision and planning activities. A major concern seemed to be the limited autonomy he had as a principal.

At the time of the interviews, Dhonbe was faced with many dilemmas that impinged upon the partnership between the school and parents in the community. He said that there are high expectations on the part of the parents and the authorities that we produce good results, but when trying to achieve such outcomes, our hands are tied behind our backs; in other words, he did not have sufficient resources and the means for such ends. He reported that many of his teachers were incompetent and unskilled, the class sizes were too big (more than 40 in some cases), the curriculum was out-dated, the school was run in two shifts, and consequently, the number of teaching hours was reduced. All these factors contributed to low academic performance. Furthermore, he said that the extra activities imposed by the Ministry of education result in extra taxation on the part of the teachers. Consequently, he had to deal with unhappy teachers who did not want to give their time voluntarily. Such factors often led to low morale among the staff and ineffective teaching.

Dhonbe dealt with the above dilemmas by using various strategies he had learned through training and experience. Building good relationships with the teachers and the parents was a key factor. He consulted the teachers and also sought advice from parents on school matters. Parents meetings were regularly held to raise awareness of the ongoing issues. Appeals were made to the authorities through the parents to address the most needy issues and difficult matters. He also sought regular advice from his superiors at the Ministry and kept them informed of school programs and activities. He also gathered informal comments and advice from his network of colleagues. Thus, in dealing with the dilemmas, his policy was, first, to keep the stakeholders informed of the difficulties on a regular basis. Secondly, he employed a humanistic and participative approach to running the school, where democratic values were emphasized.

Dhonbe acknowledged the stress and difficulties of dealing with the dilemmas. He gained strength from his personal beliefs and faith. His persistence and determination and moral strength assisted him in his work towards his aims

Principal Dhavoodh (pseudo name)

Davood also works in a government primary school in Male' with a student population of 2010 students. There are 152 members of staff in the school with a teaching staff of 101. Like the other schools, it is also run as a two shift-school.

At the time of interview, Dhavoodh had been the principal of his present school for 5 years. He is an experienced principal who has worked in a number of schools over a period of twenty years, both in Male', and in the outer-islands.

He started his career as a primary teacher. He moved to the position of a principal because he was ambitious and wanted a position of high status. Moreover, he valued teaching as a moral virtue, and engagement in teaching gave him personal satisfaction. Thus, leading a school was seen as a way of fulfilling his aspirations and personal goals.

From the very beginning of his career, he realized that he possessed leadership qualities, which enabled him to establish his position. These qualities included charisma, tolerance, and perseverance. He believed that by being a principal, he could bring about changes to classroom teaching and play a key role in developing an exciting learning environment for the children in the school. He is a great fan of progressive education, and his philosophy of education was based on child-centered learning and activity methods of teaching.

Dhavood's preparation for this position included three years of training courses in educational management and administration. He attended the training programs after working as a primary teacher for two years. The training programs developed his awareness of leadership style and an understanding of his personality. However, he reported that the real preparation was the 'on the job training' he acquired. As a practitioner, he often found it hard to put theory into practice, and generally, employed improvisations in dealing with management issues. It was through practice he gained confidence and developed his unique style of leadership over a period of time.

For him, growing confidence was an important dimension of leadership, and he further noted that confidence was gained through practice. He acknowledged that it was through practice he developed an understanding of leadership and applied the knowledge to practice. For him, leadership was about leading, guiding and team building to attain organizational goals. It entailed the capacity to set collective goals towards a shared vision. However, he highlighted an obvious dilemma when attempting to create a collective or an individual vision in the school, as the school principals in the Maldives are only required to implement the agenda of the Ministry of Education.

Nevertheless, Dhavood believed three major aspects have led to his success. These included teamwork, staff involvement in planning and organizing school programs and activities, and creating a friendly environment in the school for the students, staff and parents. He had an 'open philosophy' in managing the school. He provided opportunities for the teachers and the parents to get involved and to contribute to the school programs. He always found time to listen to the others; particularly the grievance of his staff, and the complaints of the parents.

At the time of the interview, he noted a great dilemma. It was dealing with the parents' complaints about poor teaching and lower performance of the school, while taking heed of teacher grievances and the stressful conditions under which they worked.

In addressing the above dilemma, his personal philosophy was to lead the organization by acting as a mediator between the teachers and parents, the authorities and the staff. This involved negotiating, compromising and building relationships.

Dhavood noted that as a principal, he was faced with a number of other dilemmas. These involved the managerial tasks he had to perform as opposed to his personal philosophy of teaching and learning. In principle, he wanted a leadership role which allowed him the freedom to exercise his personal vision for the school; a vision that had been developed along the line of his personal philosophy of education. The focus of his vision was centered on the development of the child, and providing an education which has value for the individual and common good of the nation. However, in practice, he had to implement an outdated curriculum using poor quality teachers with limited resources. It was a curriculum that lacked the vigour to develop the potential of children and inculcate social and moral values which encapsulated his personal vision. It was also not possible to introduce any innovations or launch a school-based program without the approval of the authorities. However, he reported many attempts to introduce new programs to improve the teaching and learning process and related them to resource constraints, lack of support and appreciation from the superiors at the Ministry.

As a leader in the school, Dhavood was the icon of the school. Thus, he believed that he must lead by example. Although he could not materialize a personal vision for the school, he undertook his leadership role with a personal philosophy of management. This involved aspects such as motivating staff, team building, and participatory decision-making. He believed staff unity was important in enhancing organizational effectiveness. Thus, he gave priority to building relations among the groups within the school.

Dhavood's leadership actions consist of organizing and conducting regular meetings on policy implementation, setting up mechanisms to monitor the progress of individuals and group work, and providing feedback and support.

For him, leadership actions primarily involved decision-making and providing support to implement them. He recognized this as an effective way to motivate the

staff and to get their full commitment. He further asserted that when the staff was involved in the decision-making process, they developed a sense of ownership of the school, which was vital in enhancing the effectiveness of the institution. He also extended his decision-making process beyond the school. This included consultation with parents on school matters. In this way, he found it quite effective in dealing with the very hard decisions of the school, though most of them were imposed by the Ministry of Education.

Significantly, he recognized the tasks of a principal required a high level of commitment and particular qualities. These included both a personal philosophy and personal characteristics. The personal philosophy comprised of values and beliefs, and the characteristics were noted as charisma, tolerance and perseverance.

Appendix C

Interview Consent Form

Thank you again for making yourself available for this interview. Following guidelines for good research practice, I would like to formally ask for your consent to participate in this study. Please read the following information below carefully before giving your consent at the end of this page.

I plan to interview your for about an hour about issues related to leadership practice and your perception on the subject. This will be recorded on a digital recorder. I will use this data and the background data you provide in the first section to inform my dissertation research on leadership and leadership practices in the Maldives.

I will observe the usual anonymity practices (e.g., names of people will be changed in the transcript) and try my best to maintain confidentiality.

I will primarily use the data for research purposes. However, I may use data for presentation in the future (e.g., in a conference or publications); if so, I will still maintain informant anonymity.

Let me acknowledge again how much I appreciate your cooperation. Feel free to contact me if you are interested in the results of my analysis.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at:
zameer_abdulla@hotmail.com

To indicate your consent, please fill out the information below and tick the boxes.

Name (Please print)	
Signature	
Date	

- I consent being interviewed by Abdulla Zameer
- I consent to the data I provide being analysed for research and presentation purposes, and understand that as far as possible anonymity will be preserved whenever data is presented.

Appendix D

Job Description of School Heads

Tasks /responsibilities
Preparation of the school time-table according to the Ministry's instructions and specifications
Allocate teachers to the classes in accordance with their abilities and aptitudes
Plan and allocate work to the teachers, supervisors and assistant principals, and administrative staff
Monitor and supervise the work of the deputy heads/asst. principals, supervisors, and administrative staff
Monitor the work of the teachers to ensure that they cover the curriculum areas specific in the syllabi in accordance with the time frames determined by the Ministry.
Work towards creating a conducive, learning environment in the school
Identify students with disabilities and maintain records of such students
Plan and conduct learning programs for students with learning disabilities, and work closely with their parents to enhance the effectiveness of such programs.
Establish and maintain an information system which would enable and enhance the effectiveness and efficiency
Maintain personal conduct among staff and the students in accordance with the Ministry's expectations
Conduct regular meetings with the academic and administrative staff , and maintain the records of the meetings
Work towards maintaining and enhancing better relations with the public
Utilize the available resources wisely
Maintain the school enrolment and other related logs of the school
Work closely with School Board and the Parent Teacher Association
Visit classrooms and provide guidance and support to the teachers
Provide necessary data and information to the Ministry in terms of teacher requirements and other school needs
Manage the school funds according to the instructions and specifications of the Ministry
Prepare annual report and submit it to the Ministry
Attend to students and teachers and other staff discipline issues in accordance with the Ministry's instructions
Attend to parents' concerns
Attend to Ministry's meetings
Attend to day to day corresponding, and other related tasks

Source: Ministry of Education (2007)

Appendix E

Requesting the Schools Heads for the Asynchronous Interview

25 May, 2006

Dear sir / Madam,

With reference to the phone conversation I had with you in April 2006, I forward the questionnaire as part of my research project in undertaking a doctoral study programme in the University Of Bristol, UK. I am collecting data on issues related to school management, particularly leadership practices. Thus, I intend to collect your perception on leadership and management as your personal experience, and apparently, assuming your absolute support in this endeavour.

The information that you provide will be retained confidentially and the individual name will not be identified within any sphere of this project.

I have entrusted my daughter Azha Zameer to deliver the questionnaire, and subsequently to collect the filled copies and to send it to me.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

Abdulla Zameer

Appendix F

Data collection Schedules and Coding System

Informants	**Code**
Principal Rani (pseudonym)	R
Principal Kab (pseudonym)	K
Principal Buddy (pseudonym)	B
Principla Sithi (pseudonym)	S
Principal Dhonbe (pseudonym)	Dn
Principal Davoodh (pseudonym)	D

Documents	
School log	SL
School Handbook	SH
Minutes of the staff meetings	MM
School calendar	RC
Guidelines for the Parents Teacher Association	GPT
School council guidelines	GSC
Principal's Job Description	PJD

Date	Code	Nature of Data Collection	Topic/Subject	
21/1/06, 3/8/06	RAI	Asynchronous Interview (1)	Broad Question on the role of school leadership	
29/6/06, 3/2/07	RI1	Synchronous Interview (1)	Specific Questions on tasks, responsibilities, dilemmas	
3/2/07	RI2	Synchronous Interview (2)	Follow up on tasks , responsibilities and dilemmas	
7/2/07	RC	Curriculum Vitae	Educational background / Experience/	

			Career development	
29/06/07	RCP	Concept map	Contextual influences on school leadership	
6/7/06	KAI1	Asynchronous Interview	Broad Question on the role of school leadership	
12/4/06	KSI	Synchronous Interview (1)	Specific Questions on tasks, responsibilities, dilemmas	
6/7/06	KC	Curriculum Vitae	Educational background / Experience/ Career development	
6/7/06	KCP	Concept map	Contextual influences on school leadership	
18/8/06	BAI	Asynchronous Interview (1)	Broad Question on the role of school leadership	
1/1/06	BI1	Synchronous Interview (1)	Specific Questions on tasks, responsibilities, dilemmas	
3/3/07	BI2	Synchronous Interview (2)	Follow up Questions on tasks, responsibilities and dilemmas	
18/8/06	BC	CV	Educational background / Experience/ Career development	
18/8/06	BCP	Concept map	Contextual	

			influences on school leadership	
10/8/06	SAI	Asynchronous Interview (1)	Broad Question on the role of school leadership	
2//7/06	SI1	Synchronous Interview (1)	Specific Questions on tasks, responsibilities, dilemmas	
	SC	CV	Educational background / Experience/ Career development	
21/11/06	SI3	Face to face Interview (3)	Follow up questions on the asynchronous and synchronous Interview	
	DnAI	Asynchronous Interview (1)	Broad Question on the role of school leadership	
3/7/06	DnI1	Synchronous Interview (1)	Specific Questions on tasks, responsibilities, dilemmas	
	DnCV	Curriculum Vitae	Educational background / Experience/ Career development	
7/8/2007	DnI3	Face to face Interviews (3)	Follow up questions on the asynchronous and synchronous Interview	
21/1/06, 3/8/06	DAI	Asynchronous Interview (1)	Broad Question on the role of	

			school leadership	
29/6/06, 3/2/07	DI1	Synchronous Interview (1)	Specific Questions on tasks, responsibilities, dilemmas	
3/2/07	DI2	Synchronous Interview (2)	Follow up on tasks , responsibilities and dilemmas	
18/8/06	DC	CV	Educational background / Experience/ Career development	
18/8/06	DCP	Concept map	Contextual influences on school leadership	

Appendix G

Exploring Leadership: Practitioners Perspectives: Asynchronous Interviews with the School Principals

- Name of the Principal: .....
- Gender .....
- Name of the school: .....

1. Could you comment on your personal goals and aspirations as a principal?

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2. How would you describe your leadership style?
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3. Do you have a personal vision for you school, if so, what is it?
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4. What is your role as a leader/manager?

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5. How would you describe your perception of responsibility and accountability as a school head?

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6. What is your personal philosophy of education?

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7. What challenges do you face as a school principal?

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8. What is your view on enhancing school effectiveness?

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9. Could provide an account of your professional development in terms of your training, and other professional engagements?

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10. Could you give an account of your leadership and managerial task/responsibilities?

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11. What are your constraints?

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12. What strategies do you use in dealing conflicts with your staff, parents and the authorities?

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13. Any other comments:

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Thank you for your kind assistance and cooperation.